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**ON WANDERING WHEELS**

*BY THE SAME AUTHORS*

MODERN FRENCH PAINTERS

POOR FOLK IN SPAIN

TWO VAGABONDS IN THE BALKANS

MISADVENTURES WITH A DONKEY IN  
SPAIN

TWO VAGABONDS IN LANGUEDOC

TWO VAGABONDS IN SWEDEN AND  
LAPLAND

TWO VAGABONDS IN ALBANIA







CORN HARVEST IN NEW JERSEY



# ON WANDERING WHEELS

*Through Roadside Camps from Maine to Georgia  
in an Old Sedan Car*

By

JAN GORDON AND CORA J. GORDON

*Illustrated by the Authors*

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## PREFACE

In years gone by America was the Land of Romance for Europe. Indians, pioneers, slaves, gold seekers, cow-boys, Mormons, the Civil War and trusts kept the romance at high pressure point until Mr. Sinclair Lewis, in the eyes of Europe, exploded the bubble. Even America herself, proud of her development as the first commercial nation of the world, has disdained to acknowledge how much romance she contains. For, essentially romantic America still remains. Founded in romance, developed by romantics, and recruited from the more romantic elements of Europe (since the unromantic are always the stay-at-homes), how shall she so quickly lose that inherent quality?

The European lecturer voyaging to America, to earn good money and to be entertained by the women's clubs, does not as a rule perceive the romantic which exists even in those institutions. He is inclined to take himself seriously instead of understanding that he is, in reality, only part of a great illusion; and, on return to Europe, he writes of them in much the terms that we might expect a ghost, summoned willy-nilly to a spiritualistic table-rapping, to use in describing the personnel of that séance. From his angle the romance is almost invisible.

So we, believing what we have subsequently proved to our own satisfaction, that America is still one of the most romantic of countries, chose another way to gather evidence, and the results of that enquiry are presented in the following pages.

We want you to imagine, all through the book, the natural accompaniment of touring in an old car. To insist on it at intervals in the text would be too monotonous, so from

chapter four onward you should read, behind the incidents, this mechanical obbligato ad lib, this *ballet mécanique* of the road. Imagine the rattles and squeaks of the old body, the whistling of the wind into the gaping joints of door and window, the knocking of the worn tappets and rockers, the chirruping of small gears and the grinding of large, the squealing of brakes, the clashings of rust eaten fenders; to which you may add any other kind of sound which your fancy conjures up. Then you will have conceived the real atmosphere.

This book is in some ways an anti-Babbitt book. Europe, and particularly England, deluded to some extent by the fact that noisy and ill mannered travelers are more memorable than well behaved ones, have taken literally the books of Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken. They cannot altogether be blamed. When Mencken says, "110,000,000 human beings, all of them alike," European readers often believe him and believe that he believes himself. Foreign travelers come over to prove him correct and, as one finds what one is looking for, they can gather enough evidence to convince themselves and their readers. They come Babbitt hunting and pin their specimens out in rows. In consequence Europe has been convinced that American standardisation has advanced to the point of producing only realtors of the Babbitt kind, living in Zeniths and Main Streets. For this idea, America has herself, in part, to blame. There are so few fine books which give the other side.

We came here as amateur vagrants in spite of the attempts of many an American friend to stop us. "You will find nothing romantic in America," they said. But we found the country far more romantic and interesting from our angle than even we had hoped. Nevertheless, American readers must be warned that if we sometimes describe at length scenes which are mere commonplaces to them it is



because we know that such pictures of American life will strike with a sense of novelty and surprise on the European reader's idea of what America is today. From these he will see a much more human place and a less terrifying development than he has been led to imagine by some of the modern American novelists.

We have no intention of trying to offer advice such as is too frequently offered by casual foreigners. Our observations and the deductions therefrom are as direct and as logical as we can make them, and imply no more criticism than the ordinary man makes in his everyday life. We would like, in conclusion, to place on record our gratitude for the kindness and hearty good will which we found everywhere on the road, and which made our tour not only easy but a delight.

JAN GORDON  
CORA J. GORDON.



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ON WANDERING WHEELS

A hundred and ten million human beings, all of them alike(?).—H. L. MENCKEN.

In a folk book not only great characteristics should be gathered but small ones also. . . . Not all the pictures in a gallery are great. Variety is what gives interest.  
—HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.





## CHAPTER I

### THE FOURTH AT CONEY ISLAND

If you must sing Coney Island, sing it in its native tongue; as far, that is, as Coney Island can be said to have a tongue at all. So, borrowing the muse of Milt Gross and Mrs. Feitelbaum, we chant:

You no go in dat Konney Ilan', vot hit call?  
You no ain't see dat Noo York Ceety, not at all.

As we offer the suggestion, we imagine the spires of New York quivering with indignation. The Woolworth tower shudders, as you may perceive it shudder any hot day when the heat strikes up from the pavements; and the Ritz sways agitatedly, even more than its rumoured gale swing of eighteen inches. But we are not talking of the towers.

That tall serrated sky line of the city rests on an infinite mass of basement and foundation. Some canker of rust, a little too mordant, in a steel support, and— Whop! away

would go your tower, cutting a great circle against the astonished clouds to smash on the street into a hundred lines of newspaper scare heads.

So, too, your four hundred and your intellectuals are there only by the grace of Mrs. Feitelbaum and family. You may despise them, but your weight rests on their shoulders; take them away and you must come down from the clouds to become basements yourselves. So, if you have not seen her at play in Coney Island, you have not seen New York.

In Europe the average European gets his fun in a quiet way often unsuspected by the ordinary traveller. Even in his obvious poverty, numerous feasts and holidays give the peasant much distraction; a kind of distraction almost non-existent in this hard-driven New York. The straight jacket of commercial competition binds until the victim suffers from an imperative need to kick about violently and loosen his spiritual limbs. Coney Island is the place where this loosening is done. It is a hardy annual Happy Hampstead raised in pitch, by every imaginable ingenuity, from a casualness which may satisfy the easy laughing Londoner to a zenith of mechanical perfection. Coney Island offers wealth to anyone ingenious enough to devise a new way in which humanity may bump, batter, slither, daze, twist, wrench, giddyfy, scare, bewilder, mystify or deceive itself. It is an emotional safety valve by means of physical self-torture; a flagellant discipline disguised as amusement.

The Cockney on the heights of Hampstead needs no more than a feather in his hat, a girl on his arm, a bottle or two of beer under his belt and a mouth organ between his lips; he will then manufacture his own gaiety. A few cocoanut cockshies, a trivial merry-go-round, with a steam organ urging on the mouth organs, will lend the Londoner an abandon

hard to rival anywhere. But America, even immigrant America, is more sophisticated. And another contributing cause, the mixture of races in lower New York, prevents any communal fun-making on a large scale, as the diversity of tongues stopped the towers of Babel. For New York is but Babel inverted. There, the tower building ceased when the tongues were changed; here and now they are merging the tongues back into one, and the towers are resuming their skyward ambitions. But God sits aloft and makes no sign. He is not as primitive as he was. He has tried out this invention of his for many a thousand years. He is undisturbed; he knows now that he is out of reach, build they never so crazily.

Mingle with the crowds at Coney Island on the Fourth of July and you may be surprised to find how little English is spoken. The Island of Amusement is the result of a growing sophistication and of a racial and lingual diversity. Not the pure American but the Half-American keeps Coney Island in funds. The people come from those who do the dog's work of New York, the semi-digested. They come here to shake themselves loose for a moment from the mechanical and colossal Robot which has caught them in his hands.

The perspiring masses move slowly along; they chew the economically satisfying product of Mr. Wrigley; they stare up at the garish banners of the freak or variety shows; they calculate the true worth, to them, in nickels or dimes, of the various weird paintings:

THE MAN WITH THE ELEPHANT'S SKIN

THE HALF-MAN, HALF-WOMAN

THE MAN WITH THE BEAR'S HIDE

THE FISH WOMAN

THE BEAUTY WITH THE LONGEST BEARD IN THE WORLD



These Coney Island visitors do not spend their money lavishly or recklessly. They belong, for the most part, to races which have gained the reputation of looking at both sides of a coin before parting with it. Coney Island has to give your money's worth or delude you into thinking that it does. The Barkers, raucous voiced like human radio mechanisms, howl in competition, vaunting the uniqueness of their respective freaks. Behind the painted curtains a hundred frustrate human beings exhibit the abnormalities which have cut them off from everyday life. Penned into arenas like wild animals, they caper with grotesque animation, showing off, for the ribald wit of the foolish and the uneducated, the very defects which should make them objects of pity. Prancing like a vertebrate jellyfish, the fattest woman in the world dances the Charleston; the meagerest dwarf alive apes the heavy-weight lifter with grave exaggerations; while, alongside, unhappy monkeys strapped into electric chariots are spun in mock races round an electric car track.

Horror and half-horror fascinate the mind which has not yet lost all its simplicity. The waxwork show poses as a mentor of good example. It displays improving mottoes over scenes of the crudest realism, pretending to inculcate moral lessons while its real attraction is plain grue. Tong feuds amongst the Chinese, implements of the Spanish Inquisition, effigies of famous bandits and their enemies, the sheriffs, are posed in semi-sepulchral gloom. At the end of the corridor a group, brilliantly illuminated, portrays the murder of the moment, the Gray-Snyder case. Albert Snyder, bloody and rigid, in his death throes; Gray at the bedside, pallid with the fear of what he has done, but lifting the notorious sash weight to deliver another blow; golden haired Ruth, once the idol of the sob writer, clutching her pink silk kimono to her throat and staring with the

horror of glass eyes. Written up large over the murderous scene the materialistic warning:

## CRIME DOES NOT PAY

Before the tableau we found two Negroes agape. We thought for a moment they must be hired adjuncts to the show so perfect in character they seemed. Middle aged, they were both dressed in the height of colored dandyism. The man wore a grey bowler hat with a natty black band, a light suit of sporting cut with hemispherical waistcoat spanned by a fat, imitation gold watch chain, a big red flower in the buttonhole, check trowsers, spats and a cane. His wife was no less striking in that hue of purple which is usually worn only by the color blind; her shoes were gay with filigree leather in many tints. Entranced and horrified they stood in front of this crude waxwork and gasped out their amazement. Possibly for weeks they had been discussing the sordid crime. But not mere words, and not even the composite photographs of the tabloid press, had been able to crystallize their imaginations. Now, with the thing in front of them, sculptured from lifelike wax, the true aspect of the affair shocked them to their very depths.

"Go-osh! Go-osh!" muttered the man. "Look at dem now I asks you. Jus' ter t'ink folks cud be so wicked. An' her with her go'ln hair, so sweet an' kind like. She standin' by dere, in dat way. Go-osh! Go-osh! To t'ink day am folks what does dat kind of wickedness. An' her in pink silks, so innercent like. But sho' de Lord don' let de sinner escape, no, suh, dey don' triumph. Crime does not pay. Dat am troof. Sho' de Lord look after dat."

To which the woman answered piously,

"Praise de Lord, dat am troof. He sho' do know how to trip de sinner up, sho' He do. Praise de Lord."

Beyond the biers of the bandits stood a transformation scene. A man and a girl sat at a table, fading slowly from luxury, glee and champagne, to poverty, gloom and gin; then click: back to the champagne stage again. Before this a mother of the East Side stood, surrounded by her children. One was asking urgently:

"Vot it say, mommer, de picture?"

To which she answered:

"Dot's de vay it do you dat stoof, if you drink it all de time too mooch."

Two blocks away from the main street stretched the Board Walk where the polyglot families paraded on foot or were pushed in bath chairs, watching the half-nude, sand soiled mob swirl down below on the beach like human confetti in a whirlwind, kaleidoscopic in chromatic bathing dresses and sun scalded flesh. Here you may note the rapid surface Americanisation of the immigrant. How rapidly the gross peasant body is transformed into the bosomless business product, half office, half social gymnasium; nature bowing to art's dictation in very earnest! Sagging mothers and fathers, shameless in the revealing husk of wet stockinet, watched the gambols of daughters and sons who, in one generation, have shaped out a short limbed Botticelli type from that of Jordaens at his grossest. These parents shouted instructions in Yiddish, German, Italian, Polish, Czech, Serb; the children replied in the dialect popularized by the genius of Milt Gross. A lingual division has been split across the family.

For us, who knew old Europe so well, the sight was significant. This sprawling, athletic, semi-nude crowd was formed of those who, in Europe, do none of these things. They do not sport with Amaryllis on the beach after the days of childhood are over. For sure they would never take long miles



of railway travel to wallow like buffaloes on the beach, to smear themselves over with muddy sand as a protection against sunburn, and even to risk their lives in the waves. Yes, Even Coney Island has its dangers. In spite of the brawny life-savers, trained to a shrewd handling of the unlucky swimmer, now and again a rash person will venture too far, elude their vigilance and be swept off to sea. Or again, at Coney Island the water is sometimes contaminated by drifting sewage from New York. Of all the beaches round about, few are quite sanitary; and every year some of the bathers are brought to their last account with typhoid fever.

Coney Island whirls on.

No death agony in the waves, no absorption of poisonous bacilli can stop the mad mechanisms of Steeplechase Park. Here gaiety is capitalised. Steeplechase Park cares nothing for your tragedy as long as it can wheedle your money. The girls, their short silken dresses exchanged for parti-colored rompers, slide shrieking down the chutes, spreadeagle into the hollow polished bowls, whisk centrifugally from spinning disks, drop squealing from the crazy heights of the Sky-shooter, playing with the last emotion left to a mass, neither wholly sophisticate, nor wholly sentimental, nor wholly æsthetic—the fear of death and injury. Roughhouse for the victims of standardisation.

These machines of joy, although guaranteed to be as safe as care and supervision can make them, do nevertheless owe their success to the fact that they give an illusion of the risk of accident. They are mock suicide clubs, in which you feel certain that you can never draw the ace of spades. Yet, hover there it does, menacing but impotent. When Maxim Gorky looked at Coney Island he said; “How sad a people it must be to amuse itself thus.” He should have said, “How restricted a people—” Coney Island is not an

outlet for suppressed sadness; it really is what it seems, an explosion of suppressed gaiety.

The life of the great city demands such hectic moments of relief, now that alcohol has been forbidden. And yet, as a relief, it looks almost too decorous. Even on the Fourth, Coney Island is hardly rowdy. Those Europeans who are convinced, from a number of loud voiced samples who have been conspicuous as they travel, that America must be a babel of yelling, would be astonished at the comparative quiet of Coney Island on its most crowded day. Not the lower classes of America make you raise your voice to a shout, but the middle, the Babbitts and their progeny. Here New York's lowest of the middle and the lower class itself behaved with far more decorum than did the English aristocracy in the days of Fielding. A couple of hundred years have developed manners so that what was once customary with the gentry has become scandalous to commoners of today.

We had met our first Coney Islander long before we ever thought of visiting the Island itself; in fact, in Munich before the war.

He curried our acquaintanceship at a cheap cinema, took us to a beer-hall and there, spying around to see that nobody was watching, he lifted his hat. On the top of his head he wore his hair drawn up in a good sized topknot.

"Did you effer see de like?" he asked in the pronunciation of German-America. Further he told us that he was tattooed all over like the lady in the song:

"Around her hips was a line of battle ships."

In fact he was a professional Wild Man. At Coney Island he had posed as a savage from Borneo; here he was a true blood Cherokee. For suitable pay he would do anything

of a savage nature. He howled, gnawed raw mutton bones, tore rabbits to pieces, and wrestled. He had been a well known wrestler in his day. When we met him in Munich, he was doing a Wild Man act culminating in a challenge to wrestle with any local champion and pay five hundred marks if bested. He would allow himself to be almost floored, get the bets going with agents of his in the hall and then, at the proper signal, turn the opponent over on his back. A nice, little, profitable game, he told us. But—

“In Salzburg dey poots op a guy; t’ink he can wrastle. He sure know de dirty trick you bet. Gee! I get mad an’ I trow him so he hit de board, smack. Busted a rib or two I reckon. You can hear him all ofer de t’eater. Try de dirt on me? Why I teach him a hunnered dirty trick he never guess about. I should say. I knock all de breath outer him like a paper bag. But de folks dey git pooty mad, dey loose a lot a money, see. Dey waits outside, t’inks to fix me good. So to scare ’um I comes out with a pair of shooters in my hands. I ain’t ’fraid of trash like that—”

He at once turned his notoriety to account by making a bargain with the best saloon in the town to sit in the bar till two A.M. Half profits. But at six on the next morning a sharp rapping on the bedroom door announced the entry of the police into the game. They made him pack his bag, put him on the train and shot him off into Germany with a warning not to come back onto Austrian soil. Here he was stranded. No contracts, no immediate prospects.

At that time we and a friend, Bertram Hartman, now a well known New York painter, were living in a crazy pension, where congregated the Bohemia of Munich. Art students, decorators, poets, philosophers, doctors of law and science, university students, dress designers, gymnasium instructresses, even a rascalion Dalmatian priest, were included in its varied catalogue. Great men, such as Rhoda-

Rhoda the columnist, Michel the poet, Pascin, then an illustrator on *Jugend*, and the editors of Munich's witty press, did not disdain the fortnightly jamborees.

It was a period of intense Nietzscheism. A Swedish gymnasium instructress, at sight, fell violently in love with the vital force of our strange supper companion. He made our blood run cold with fantastic lies about the ways and habits of the Indian tribe from which he said he came. A Rabelaisian feast was inspired by his presence, over which for a time he presided, like an uncouth Buddha. But in the end the mountebank was shocked.

"What dis place you bring me to?" he asked in a hoarse whisper. "You t'ink dis respectable?"

"This is Bohemia," I said. "It has its own code of manners."

"I neffer see no respectableness like dis one," he asserted. "Dat girl now, she make lof to me, plain lof; and eyes! Pah! an' me a respectable man wit' a famly. T'ank you, dat you ask me, but I t'ink I go back to my hotel now. I say goot night. An' t'ank you gen'lemen."

There was more than a hint of austerity in his voice; there was reproof. The mountebank from Coney Island, the professional spoofer, the Wild Man from Borneo was frankly scandalised by the behaviour of ordinary Bohemia. Apart from the fact that he was tattooed from head to foot, that he could wrestle and that he had no repugnance to gnawing raw bones, tearing rabbits into pieces and doing business by a covert swindle, he was an everyday citizen, a good father and a faithful husband. And, last revelation of all, he had been born in a suburb of Hamburg.

In Coney Island, one of the lures to tempt the too careful spender is the booth of free entry. Those who from the open street would never spend their pence will, if tempted

into the free portion, be persuaded to penetrate even to the depths of the paying part of the show. Besides, the barker is not working in open competition with all the street of his like. In such a place Jo, lured there by the sound of oriental music, found herself a Coney Island show for a moment. The booth was called "Syrian Village." On either side of the lobby were cheap stalls appropriate to the place; rank perfumes claiming to be from Arabia, Turkish Delight which never saw the Mediterranean, fortune telling, palmistry, crystal gazing and other gypsyish arts of wheedling your pence; and last, a model of the Temple at Jerusalem, naturally very attractive to a full half of the visitors to Coney Island.

On a stage, three plump, dark haired young women, dressed as houris, were languidly dancing and suggesting by means of lascivious glances that much livelier stuff would be exhibited behind the pay curtain. A lean man and a fat man formed the intriguing orchestra. The lean man blew a pipe, inflating his cheeks to rival those of any painted, windy cherub; the fat man banged a drum in a subtle rhythm.

Impossible to draw amongst that crowd, so we paid to pass into the show.

There a flashingly dressed man, chewing gum, came up to us and demanded of Jo who was sketching:

"Doin' this for the press?"

"Well then," he went on, at Jo's assent, "you can sure draw anything you want to in this here show. But, I tell you, you should draw our old General. He's a real Syrian Notable; sheik and all that. A sure enough historical character. Nobody to match him in this here Island, to my mind."

The old sheik was a tall man with a white beard curling two ways like the tail of a black-cock. His venerable and



not too clean hair fell over a stock of black velvet studded with brooches of imitation diamonds, representing baskets of flowers, mandolins, peacocks, birds on a branch, clasped hands and so forth. No sooner had Jo started to draw than he took to his heels and scampered out of the booth.

"What's bit him?" asked his proprietor.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Jo. "He said something like 'Phut-phut,' and ran."

In a moment the old man was back with a string of post-cards. All his available history was there, even back as far as his comparative youth. I suppose that in some time, now remote, he may have really taken part in a local revolt and been in consequence outlawed and banished. Now he was forced to earn his bread in this absurd show at Coney Island. We wondered how he contrasted his present with his past. But perhaps he was lucky to be alive. In this pictorial record one photo caught Jo's eye. It showed the old man playing on a native instrument with a long slender handle.

"Why," she cried, "that's a bouzouka."

"Bouzouk', bouzouk'," exclaimed the old man with delight. "I go fetch."

Once more clutching up his ceremonial garments he fled.

"Spry for his age," commented the gum chewer. "Got a small room upstairs where he keeps his stuff."

It was a beautiful bouzouka, inlaid with silver, made by the old man himself. With a charming smile he presented it to Jo. She at once sat down on the bench and began to flick out little Albanian tunes. The Coney Island public, little expecting this sort of diversion, grouped itself round us.

Meanwhile the gum chewer had brought up to me a girl dressed in the latest style of East Side New York.

"Some kid this," was his way of introduction. "I got her in Syria too. 'N 'orfan. 'Dopted her as you may say; sent

her to be edjicated at a classy boarding school. Now, she's my—well, call her a secretary."

She looked Syrian enough, but had no desire to revive memories of the past. She dodged my questions and pointings to Jo asked:

"Your wife?"

"Yes."

"Artist and all that sort of thing?"

"Yes."

She pondered on the two affirmations for a moment; then offered her conclusions:

"Humph. Bit of a kerricter, I should say."

"You're right," I answered.

The old sheik had taken the instrument from Jo and was picking out with loving care weird Syrian melodies. His wrinkled tired eyes had come alive again. The routine of Coney Island fell from his shoulders. For so many years now he had postured and pranced, like an old fool, before this alien audience, earning his bread by travestyng the customs of his own land. Here at last were beings who really seemed to understand, a woman who could play his beloved instrument; not a mere sight-seer. Sympathy welled visibly from him.

And then, in contrast, the secretary girl showed the full effects of her "classy" education.

"Aw, Sheik," she cried, "cut that sob stuff and play a bit of lively jazz."

The old man looked at her with hate glistening under his lashes. But the fattest of the three houris, by now mounted on the mangy camel, screamed out at him in an exasperated voice. The Syrian bridal procession was going to start. He was the leader in a sword dance. No more time for pleasure. Reluctantly he laid the bouzouka near Jo, picked up two scimitars and, waving them in a wreathing arabesque, placed

himself at the head of the cortège. Wearily in a stiff-jointed dance he resumed the task of posturing for his daily bread. I said to the secretary girl:

"Those fat girls who dance; are they Syrians too?"

"Them," she cried in disdain. "Why they're common Mexes. I wouldn't trust them farther than I would a cat. They're plain mean."

Things are hardly ever what they seem to be in Coney Island.

Behind the scenes at Coney Island might be an interesting study for a psychologist. An odd mental world should live there. It is true that our Wild Man was no more than a lower class Babbitt from Hamburg, and the ex-Syrian girl a plain hussy; but what might be the peculiar twist of the fattest woman alive or of the smallest dwarf? Not the spoofer but the genuine freak could perhaps give us a new angle from which to view humanity. We have even debated taking lodgings in the purlieus of Coney Island to try out possibilities.

Apart from his mental twist the Coney Islander is a serious business man. He sells sensation as a grocer sells tea. He does not consider himself to be a romantic type. His eye is on the profit and loss account; that is, finally, on the weather. Aeroplanists and Coney Islanders are the most fervent readers of the Weather Bureau's reports. This season was to be particularly poor. Rain fell on so many days that bankruptcy was rife amongst the showmen. Indeed we noted later that our friends of the Syrian Village came at last to distress and the mangy camel was seized for debt.

Late that night we returned from Coney Island by train. Behind us, Steeplechase Park, Wonderland, The Sky-shooter, all the mechanisms, all the freaks, still hard at work,

flared against the sky. On the beach the bathers, now dressed, were intertwined couples of amorous neckers, lumps of darker darkness in the gloom. Many indeed would sleep there on the beach, returning to the heat of New York by the first train in the morning.

In the subway carriage we were once more struck by the fact that America does not patronise Coney Island for the most part. The compartment was filled with the home going holiday makers; filled to repletion. Amongst the loud chatter of the young men and young girls, still excited by their day of momentary relief, amongst the anxious scolding of the mothers and the whining of the tired children, hardly a word of English was to be heard.

For business purposes English might be the language they had to use; but now, on holiday, for the most part they still spoke as they used to speak in their native homes.



## CHAPTER II

### WE BUY AN OLD SEDAN

EASYPORT, on Long Island Sound, is one of the quietest places within quick reach of New York. Here the suburban influence begins visibly to fade into that old New England character which still rules the countryside. So that although Easyport lies between New York and Bridgeport, Conn., it has succumbed to neither. It has no bathing beach, no herded ranks of villas, no artists' colony, or indeed colony of any kind, no shore dinner restaurants or tea shoppes, no antique dealers. The golf course and the yacht club are modest affairs adapted to the needs of the residents and boasting neither a high flown membership nor exaggerated subscriptions. Easyport is, in fact, a little jewel, an oasis of the old New England character in the desert of encroaching seaside suburbia.

The exquisite beauty of the New England village came on



us as a complete surprise. Why was it so unexpected? We English have learned so much of our America from the cinema, I mean pictorially; New York, Chicago, Chinatowns (assorted) Slums, Middle Western villages, the purlieus of Los Angeles, Arizona mountains and nonexistent mining camps almost complete the picture which these none-too-flattering propagandists pass across to us. But New England seems to have been almost ignored by the artists also, at least from a descriptive and characteristic angle. Have the New York painters not felt the peculiar quality of the landscape lying at their doors, or have those who felt this quality themselves been inadequate to render it with a talent sufficient to impress our sensibilities? Have American authors not given time enough to descriptions of this peculiar charm, or may it be that in the hurry of modern literature landscape plays a minor part? Or is it that Beauty, like Romance, appeals more easily when it is rare and foreign and far away from the back door? Whatever the reason may be we came on the unusual loveliness of the New England village with that shock of delighted amazement which true and unexpected beauty always gives.

Hemmed in between the main road and the sea, Easyport had been moulded to its present appearance in the days when Europe was still hard to reach and New York seemed far away. It developed undisturbed in a traditional New England style. Before the cities on either hand could stretch out their deforming tentacles Easyport had vested its interests and so could resist attempts to remodel it.

We hardly expected, bustling off the train into the arms of our welcoming friends and hosts, Richard and Charlotte, to plunge straight into such an atmosphere of Nathaniel Hawthorne, only an hour's ride away from New York City. But as we purred through the tall green elm chancels of Easyport we were irresistibly reminded of Hawthorne. We

had half expected boosting Mr. Babbitt; and we met Nathaniel—which in part explains the nature of the shock.

Yes. Easyport was designed for one of Nathaniel's elusive romances. Shadowed over by the tall wine-glass elms—surely one of the most satisfyingly shaped trees in the world—the bright lawns stretched back on either hand free of those party hedges which in England our sense of privacy dictates. Set on the lawns were the white painted wooden mansions with their tall Corinthian pillars of wood, deceptive pillars giving such an air of massive dignity that it was a shock to pass a house under repair and to note how the carpenter, wishing to replace some mouldered pediments, had calmly removed them bodily, leaving the huge fluted columns suspended from the cornice. It made us think of the eternal joke of the fake heavy-weight lifter, his hundred pound dumb-bell, and the impertinent guttersnipe.

Overhead the shadowing leaves of the massed wine-glass elms, with their lovely curved branches holding up the verdure, looked like the translucence of *crème de menthe* in some dainty Venetian goblet, and through the foliage the creamy white of the houses standing on the vivid sward borrowed a reflected tint of *eau-de-nil* till Easyport was a symphony in green, to which contrasting tints were given by the dashes of blue sparkle from Long Island Sound and the white or orange pyramids of sail as the yachts slowly stole up the estuary towards their moorings before the club house. The clatter of the waterplane boats, as they blustered their way out to their speed grounds on the Sound, was the only hint of intruding and raucous modernism.

Almost at the edge of the creek stood a house which Nathaniel might have chosen as the setting for a drama. The trees clustered close about it so that its dark colours, chocolate and green, seemed even more somber. It had a wooden turret, built by a sea captain, who spent his retire-

ment drawing the old familiar sea as close as he was able with his spy glass. The house was a queer morose contrast to the delicate green-white houses around and, adding to the sinister quality, it was shuttered and dead. No person disturbed that aloof seclusion except Burt, the Easyport retainer, who visited it once a week.

A blunt and bullet headed man this Burt, nothing much to look at, either as an example of industry or intelligence, a slow plodding sort of drudge, typical, like Montaigne's agriculturalist, "speaking only of what he knows and no further." And yet this same Burt was, you may say, barometer of New England aristocracy in Easyport. He did not boast aristocratic blood himself, no d'Urberville he, but his parents had been retainers of one of the two main Easyport families. His mother had a house and a pension in grateful remembrance. So, early in his childhood, Burt absorbed a sense of the importance and the value of pedigree. Day labourers were scarce in Easyport. The nearness of Bridgeport tempted away most of the ambitious youth; free lancing in labour is hardly an American habit. So Burt was able to pick and choose, and he chose by family precedence. If two rival houses claimed his services on the same day, his preference went by birth more than by salary. Burt gave the accolade in Easyport, and was not unaware of his importance. His employment was the certificate of nobility. Intruding *nouveaux riches* had offered double wages to Burt, but he knew their place. His pride was above price, and even in this so-called democratic America he understood what was due to lineage.

The two principal families of Easyport have been here as long as Easyport has been a place. One family founded it, the other married into the founder's family, and since then the whole has grown into a tangle of cousinships as entwined as are the branches of the wine-glass elms overhead.

But unlike so many of the New England families they have not dwindled and faded out, leaving but a memory and a name. They have progressed on the lines of modest but solid success and have held Easyport in a family grip. The younger generation is abreast of the times, some go daily to New York on business, but the older generation keeps up a hint of the older style. There is no need for them to ape the mode of the New York summer residents and reconstruct New England interiors; they still have 1870 interiors undisturbed by the conscious strivings of art. The serene old retired judge is family dictator; uncles, like characters from Dickens, are unseen but lend zest to many an old anecdote; and white haired aunts, dainty, dignified and a little imperious, peering from the windows of their mansions, would be able to give you quite a diary of the doings of Easyport as it comes within the radius of their vision. One of these aunts indeed was quite bewildered by my own innocent actions for a couple of days.

The old lady saw her niece-in-law's car steal cautiously out of the barn. No sooner was it on the road than it began a series of antics quite unusual to cars; it seemed to have lost all the straightforward virtues of an automobile and to have adopted the vices of an unruly and ill-handled horse. It backed and filled, shied, turned sideways, got stuck across the road, balked, stalled, jibbed, backed again; and it coughed repeatedly. Looking closer, the astonished dame espied within her niece-in-law's car a rough looking man with dishevelled hair, longer than it should have been, who was merely myself practising on my friend's car previous to facing the authorities at Bridgeport in examination for a driver's certificate.

In Europe the ownership of an automobile still wins you respect. A car owner cannot be more than a few generations removed from Cræsus. The car still marks a certain station



in life, and the ruck no more expect to own a car than, in our grandmother's day, it expected to wear flowers in its bonnet or real lace on its underclothing—such things were reserved for the gentry. So I still remember the thrill of astonishment with which I heard a story told us by a Paris-American just returned from a trip to the country of his birth. I may add that the incident had also been a shock to him; he had lived for many years in Paris and was out of touch with home life.

In his native town he and an artist friend were standing on the steps of the palatial art school when a car was driven up. A young man got out and, having parked to one side, ran up the art school steps.

"Good heavens," said our friend, "do the students now come to school in automobiles?"

"Student?" answered the other. "He isn't a student; he's the model."

Since that time we had heard of the small prices of motor cars in America. We had heard even of one lad who bought a Ford for \$5. It is true that the owner had to garage the car at the top of a long and steep hill, for no human power could crank the machine into action; but, once going, it would run and would even clamber back again to its stable; so that practically it was a success. We knew another boy who bought a truck for \$25.

When thinking out ways and means of making a long contemplated trip to the United States we had speculated on how it might be done not only cheaply but also unconventionally. Our fancies played with the idea of a \$5 Ford and a few months of vagabond camping on the highways and byways of America.

But to dream of a \$5 Ford was easier than to find one. Cars, like horses, change value according to the eagerness of the purchaser and the cut of his jacket. Moreover, with



our lack of experience, we did not want a car which could only be kept moving by sheer mechanical genius and by that kind of second sight known to car experts and college boys. Being English, our circumstances have not led us into much intimacy with motoring practice; although during the war I once worked for a year in the Rolls Royce factory helping to construct aeroplane engines. But the mere fact of grinding pistons or cam-shafts did not make me an expert on the carburettor or the induction coil. I had some mechanical knowledge and a certain feeling for nuts and bolts so that I was not positively intimidated by the complex tangle under the hood, and I judged that by the time the trip was over I would have learned a lot about motors. The risks of a \$5 Ford were not to be thought of, even if we had found one; but we hoped, with local advice, to buy something which was a compromise between our slender purse and our yet more slender experience.

The easy families in Easyport were not perhaps the best advisers on the art of finding such a car. They gave us a cheery New England welcome, they received us with a mixture of good humour, admiration, jest and cocktails; they did not quite know whether they wanted to be used for a book at all, or whether we would think them worthy of being put into a book; but of cheap cars and of motor camps they knew nothing. They had heard that such things existed but beyond their ken. "Rather you than me," they thought. The easy families of Easyport had not bred boys. A couple of college lads would have taught us more of the used car business than could all the collected dignity of Easyport. For Easyport drove firsthand cars, Chryslers and Marmons and Buicks and Willys Knights. The lowest to which it could descend was a Chevrolet, and the owner apologised for that in much the same half joking way as the vicar's wife in England apologises for driving a donkey shay.

However, Richard, never failing host, took us the round of all the used car departments in Bridgeport, where, if we did not buy, we could at least look over the secondhand car business. A Ford for \$5 does not of course take any place in the open market. It does not belong wholly to illusion, but to that coincidence of the time, the place, the eager seller and the reluctant buyer. The \$5 Ford is not a marketable commodity but a thing rescued by luck from the brink of the cemetery, its wheels hanging over the sills of the knacker's yard, a Lazarus car, or perhaps more like the corpse dug up by the resurrection men and discovered to be merely cataleptic.

Behind the tremendous development of the American car industry stands a figure in a coffin, as it did at the Egyptian feast; this is the corpse of the used car. For years now these super efficient American plants have been at full burst till there is a car to every seven or eight persons in the country, which must be practically at saturation point. Even tramps and Gypsies go about in cars. The broughams and dogcarts of our ancestors did not demand a never ending change. There was no danger of forfeiting social esteem in 1830 if your barouche was an 1816 model; discreet use and slow alterations in fashion did little to deteriorate carriage property. But now, whether your car is a 1922 or 1928 model does make all the difference socially.

The average life of a well made car is from seven to eight years, so that every man who wishes to buy the latest car and trades in his last year's model has practically set in motion a chain of selling which will not be exhausted till seven secondhand cars have been sold. This chain is of course diminished by accident and ill use, but probably every new car sold in the United States today means the transference of four or five secondhand cars or an accumulation of unsaleable

secondhand cars in the dealer's warehouses. And this glut is likely to become much worse instead of better.

Through warehouse after warehouse of used cars we wandered, under the careful ægis of Richard, hearing the dealer vaunt the virtues of cars not his own stock. For this incongruity has resulted from the fact that the man who wishes to sell a new Buick may have to take in part payment his client's used Hup; then to sell the Hup he must boost Hups, when his whole soul is concentrated on boosting Buicks; so that he has to temper his praise with caution, and often indeed he sounds a little insincere.

Richard and I went from shop to shop simulating an air of wisdom about used cars and engines which we did not feel; for Richard, though a skilled driver, is content to leave the mechanical part to the proper technician. But Jo came for a different purpose. She knew exactly what she wanted from a car. The light of superior decision in her eye deluded one dealer who, while she was examining a car, took the greatest trouble over her, talked of clutches and gear-shifts and finally almost thrust her nose down amongst the works. But Jo, who did not know the exhaust from the distributor, refused to be diverted from her proper line of investigation.

"I," she declared to the disgusted man, "am looking at this car solely with a housekeeper's eye."

After we had sated our eyes with cars and cars and more cars, we went off to the Birds' Paradise, a patch of many acres, strictly enclosed with anti-cat wire, where Connecticut songsters can find free food and lodging and a total deliverance from any form of danger, competition or sudden death.

We returned from Bridgeport feeling a little depressed about the cheap motor car. No doubt there was a glut in the

car market, but the moment was not propitious. First, the time was early summer, and in the summer cheap cars are in more demand; secondly, Mr. Ford had shut down production while he was reorganizing for his new model, rumors of which were beginning to appear in the press; thirdly, many people were not buying new cars but were waiting to see what surprise Mr. Ford was hinting at; lastly, Richard himself had such an air of easy American circumstances that the dealers were almost shy of showing us their cheapest bargains. Nor do I think that Richard knew much of those lower haunts of car dealing where, if you could not buy a \$5 Ford, you might get something for a couple of hundred or so. Actually the cheapest suitable car we saw would have cost us \$350, and the cheapest over which any dealer would show enthusiasm cost no less than \$600. They had waved something over our heads called "probable resale value," though they knew well that, offered in a hurry, as ours would have to be at the end of our trip, few cars, bought second-hand, have any resale value at all. No dealer will buy a secondhand car, because he has his stores cluttered up with cars which he cannot sell now.

And yet Richard was the touchstone after all. Next day at lunch he remarked:

"My father's chauffeur says that he has a car which might suit you. It is a big six cylinder, five seater sedan. It will probably cost a little more to run than some of those we saw the other day, but he only wants \$150 for it. He won it in a bet. It was left in a garage; the owner would not pay the bill because no one there could make it run. Al can do anything with machinery, so he bet that he would make it go; and the bet was that he might buy it out for the price of the bill—only \$25. But he has taken the whole thing to pieces and has put in a new battery. He says it runs finely now, and if Al says it runs it *will* run."



In Easyport, just as Burt was the symbol of aristocracy, so Al was the symbol of efficiency. When we said in company that we were thinking of buying a car for \$150, the announcement was greeted with laughter and that burnished banter which characterizes modern conversation; but the statement that Al was behind the deal made the laughter at once give way to a chorus of:

"Oh, if *Al* says it will run it *will* run."

And so a day or two later Al brought the car round for our inspection.

It seemed a very large car to buy for \$150. Cars, like ladies, have slimmer figures than they had; and this car was born in 1920 before the bustless shape had been fully developed. The body was well preserved; no dents or scars marred it, though the black paint had lost its first—aye, and second—lustre, so that it had much the air of a decent kind of a woman who had seen better days but who was keeping up appearances at all costs.

Al climbed out of the car and stood by with a disconcerting, cynical immobility while we looked at the thing. He was lank, with a slightly hawklike face and an air of genial aloofness very hard to penetrate. We felt horridly ignorant in the face of that smiling certainty. Of course we were well aware that we knew all sorts of things of which Al was deplorably ignorant—art, and music, and French history, and Albania and Spanish poetry, and naval camouflage, and all that sort of thing. But under the scrutiny of that twinkle these availed nothing. Without any intention in the world, possibly, Al made one feel horridly wormlike. He was the sphynx turned chauffeur, a Mona Lisa in leather breeches.

His was the *haut-en-bas* method of salesmanship. His impenetrable silence tempted us to ask silly and ignorant questions, which we knew were silly and ignorant, but which he answered gently in monosyllables. He took us for a ride,



though of course the thing was a foregone conclusion. Anything Al had wanted to sell us he would have sold. Nevertheless—this also was typical of Al—the car was an excellent bargain, and whatever should happen to us on the road would be in no way his fault. Al received the bills for \$150 with a smile of thanks, which did not affect his private opinion of us—that we were a pair of queer nincompoops who were engaged in what he thought to be a dam' silly sort of business, and which, therefore, *was* a dam' silly sort of business.

There she stood in Richard's barn, the first car we had ever owned, the seal and sign, as it were, that we had seceded from that pedestrian-equine vagabondage which we had pursued across so many European lands. And yet this was not altogether a recantation. We have held no determined brief for pedestrianism; we are not *intransigent*. The most suitable way is always the way for us. In one of our Spanish books we have discussed the problem of different speeds adapted to different kinds of country. The plodding pack horse is suitable to Albania; the donkey is, we found, a little too slow for Spain; the bicycle suits France or England; and a car, the United States.

We see the United States as a curious phenomenon; it is unique, a country expanded to the size of a continent. It is not unlike that terrible ship in Poe's tale, the ship which had drifted into the Sargasso Sea and there, worked on by malific powers, had begun to grow so that all her timbers were several sizes larger than when she had taken to water. To ride the States at thirty-five miles an hour is equivalent to walking a lesser country on old Shank's mare. After all, consider the generality of the automobile movement here, consider that hoboese even go tramping in cars rescued from the dust heap, begging or stealing their gasoline, and you will

admit our new possession was only the American equivalent to a Spanish donkey.

Jo, in her housekeeping enthusiasm, was already ripping to pieces an old black silk dress with which to make curtains. We had planned the car almost as a caravan; close quarters inside no doubt, but we thought that with a little ingenuity we could use it for dressing and undressing and sleeping



THE MEZZANINE FLOOR

as well. The black silk curtains gave the old car an even greater air of respectability, a touch of widowhood. We should have added a jet ornament as radiator cap decoration, and it would have been complete. We christened her "The Respectable Ruin."

For sleeping we thought of hinging the backs of the front seats so that, falling down, they would bridge the gap between the front and the rear cushions—a plan used by some—but on inspecting the build of the "Ruin" we found that the seats were a part of the coach construction. To

take them away would deprive the body of support and add yet a number of new squeaks and complaints to those which her years had already imposed upon her. So, with the help of Richard, we improvised an arrangement called "The Mezzanine Floor." Three squared timbers, lying on the window sills, supported a floor of cut planks just over the backs of the seats. This left, as it seemed to us, enough room below the roof for fairly comfortable sleeping. The planks and struts were unattached and could be packed on the running board when not in use.

We wished to test the floor before dashing off into the country where defects would be more difficult to remedy. But the suggestion that we should run the car into the field, set up the floor and spend a trial night on it gave so much horror to our friends that we had to withdraw it. Easyport would never have understood. The butcher's boy and the baker's boy, the tinker, the tailor and the candlestick maker would have been so disturbed by the phenomenon that a slur might have been cast on the Richard-Charlotte respectability from which it might never have recovered. So we had to leave with our floor an untried theory.

Before dusk on the seventh of July we set out. Nobody saw us steal from Easyport except Daphne, the coloured cook. Daphne was quite a character. She had been born in a Northern State and so had a proper sense of a coloured person's dignity. But she married a man from the South, an undertaker, and during her short married life she had learned her husband's profession so that, in addition to being a cook, she was a certified "Mortician." It was not death, nor divorce, nor domestic incompatibility which brought this marriage to a separation but merely the difference between what a Negro from the South and one from the North considered to be an insult to humanity. Her husband could live quite comfortably under a tyranny which she found

intolerable. Determined that her son should not be brought up in a similar atmosphere, she packed up and came back "No'th," where, being as expert a cook as she was an undertaker, she was never in want of a place.

Richard and Charlotte had been anxious to see the start, but we were delayed; packing demanded more care and thought than we had calculated; and not until an hour after our planned time were we ready. Meanwhile our friends had to go to a party. So from behind the wire netting of the porch, Daphne was the only one to wave us a good-bye. It did not strike us as sinister that our sole well wisher should be an undertaker. I pressed my foot on the starter and the ready motor sang its note of the road. I backed carefully out from the drive, slewed the old "Ruin" round, slid in the gears one by one, and we were off on a new voyage of discovery.

Jo leaned back to give a last wave. In the gloom of the porch, dimmed a little by the fly-netting, Daphne merged slowly into the background as we receded until, just before we turned the corner, Jo could see nothing more of her than the flash of the luminous teeth floating against the shadows, like the grin of the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*.



### CHAPTER III

#### CONNECTICUT CONTRASTS

A VIVID slang is the most contagious form of American wit, and wit is that part of a country's humour which can be most easily understood by a member of a foreign nation. Wit is after all not so subtly domestic as humour. For the most part the product of literati or of the theatre, wit is a feat of the intelligence; whereas humour springs from the feelings. We have to find in American slang the word which expresses the condition we were now striving to attain. "Footloose." We would be footloose. Oddly enough American slang does not seem to be Anglo-Saxon in its affinities; a thought which opens out an interesting field of enquiry. Slang is undoubtedly an indication of mental drift, for, although it may not be generated by popular intelligence, it is, like folk song, propagated by popular acceptance. Considering the attempt to keep America Nordic (as it is



called) in temperament, we find it curious to reflect that the national wit leans strongly towards a Latin or Gallic type. The superimposition of Gallic thought on Anglo-Saxon speech gives the slang its peculiar pungency.

"Footloose"—that and similar condensations of a condition into a pregnant and parallel word, that leap, imaginatively, into and out again from a mental fourth dimension, that nimbleness of adapting symbols to states of mind, and that aptness for understanding without intermediate explanations, are not developed from an English habit of mind, nor, by long chalks, from any German. Indeed, so foreign is it to us that many an English reader is baffled by much modern American literature merely because of its unfamiliar thought processes. And yet I do not know whether this "footloose" describes the true state of an inexperienced driver loose on American roads for the first time; a driver moreover who had scrambled his license only by extreme laxity on the part of the examiner. "Footloose" only described his aspiration. "Foot-tense" would better draw the condition. Foot-tense, eye-tense, and hand-tense. A quivering body of anxiety, conscious in moments of stress that the brake and the accelerator had been put in criminally close conjunction and that the old steering wheel, with its loose bushing, had as lax a control over the front wheels as that of a modern parent over an opinionated child; conscious that he was hurling at least two tons of trouble along those Connecticut highways; trusting only to Fate to steer him through. "Footloose" indeed!

The seventh of July is still early in the American summer, but New York was beginning to spill itself, holiday seeking, so that the road was full enough; the traffic speeding along between thirty-five and fifty miles an hour. The sedateness of our mere twenty, which nevertheless seemed to me almost uncontrollably rapid, caused us to be bombarded from both

behind and before by the passing cars; they dashed at us; they swooshed by our ears. But at times we had a different effect, causing a vehicular phlebitis, a clot in the arterial circulation, so that behind us the traffic clogged. Long lines of honking and blasphemous drivers formed up in exasperated processions, little recking that in their mad desire for haste and more haste they were inciting a man to what seemed no less than either murder or suicide, or both. At one place, where road building operations caused a detour in single file over rocks, lumps, bumps, pools of mud and banks of clay, a traffic cop, set there to preserve the public from danger, bawled at me through the window:

"Wad ther Hell you dawdlin' like that for? Can't jer see yer holdin' up all the line? Step on it or I'll ticket yer. See?"

And as I nervously stepped on it I was reflecting bitterly that in England twenty-five years ago a mechanically propelled vehicle had to have a man with a red flag on foot in front for the safety of the public, while here I was in risk of being fined because I was not dangerous enough.

For our one hundred and fifty dollars we had bought not only a car, but a brave collection of squeaks, rattles, rumbles and clatters, though we lacked the speedometer chain which Al had promised to replace but had not. A man is inclined to estimate his speed by the amount of fuss he makes and at twenty m.p.h. the old "Ruin" made fuss enough to belong to Captain Campbell. However, whatever speed we rose to under the fear of arrest, we had no cause for hurry, since our first few days' trip through the valleys of Connecticut were not to total more than two hundred miles. By easy stages we broke in both the "Ruin" and ourselves, stopping to sketch, chatting in Hot Doggeries, taking wrong roads and so on. Our recognition of the likeness of our car to an old widow woman was just, for what with loose fenders and

wabbly front wheels the "Respectable Ruin" flustered along very like an old weed-clad body who finds herself late for church.

No. Nothing "footloose" about those first four days through Connecticut. Nor were our nights, as we had engaged to visit the houses of friends; unknown friends it is true, who on the receipt of letters of introduction had sent cordial invitations to look in and stay any time we were in the vicinity. Reckless hospitality, showing an almost unbelievable trust in another's judgment.

These friendly houses furnished a contrast with those of Easyport. Easyport condescended to use New York for business purposes; here New York was coming to the country for rest and recreation. Here, plaited by the coming of the car and the concrete road, was the lace fringe of Suburbia. From their interiors you could know them. Easyport, as we have said, took its drawingrooms for granted; like Topsy they just grewed; accretions of different periods had provided a sufficiency of chairs and tables, with a leaning to a bronziness in the haphazard ornaments and to a dimness and brownness in the pictures and frames. But here, New York, playing at being country, had to strike with a more definite emphasis.

These New Yorkers had not been born into their houses or furniture. They had each seized on some lucky old farm house at a moment when it hovered on the edge of decay. New England acres are none too fertile; they ill repay the American farmer, with his ideas about the proper standard of life and his ambitious family. To crop a sustenance from these lands needs the European immigrant fresh from the meanness of a peasant existence. These homesteads, then, have three possibilities—to remain the centres of a derelict family too poor to work more than a few acres, to fall into the hands of an alien with his brood of wageless but toiling

children, or to become the country home of some rich New Yorker who may decide to farm, as a hobby or as a delusion, or may allow his acres to sink back to the secondary scrub which covers so much of the Connecticut landscape.

Easypoint laid no emphasis on gardens. Indeed with the broad greenswards and tall overshadowing elms there was little need for the cultivated flower bed; the decorative ensemble was satisfactory. Every place has an instinct to adapt itself to its conditions. The Winters of New England will freeze the roots out of the ground, and the good gardener is an expensive luxury. Hence, few flowers. But New York comes to the country to spend its money; so you can almost be sure if you see an array of flowers that here is either an imported New Yorker or A Country Marm aping townish society, and passionate member of a garden club.

If the old farmyards have been turned into flower beds, what has happened within? To every bedroom its bathroom; and all through the house a tall orgy of taste. Satirists and high-brows have begun to throw wit at the competitive craze for old New England furniture, the febrile winnowing through of the antique shops, the curiosity shops or the plain junk dealers. Frenzied, grasping Americana devotees have stimulated the collecting mania to such a pitch that even an old four legged stool becomes an inestimable find, and a bottle of yellow glass is worth its weight in dollars. In every New England village the Antique Shoppes flourish exceedingly in an atmosphere of carefully arranged disorder and frowziness.

#### THE CURIOSITY SHOP

This ash-can of the past

Where, in

Dim shadows drawn from windows long uncleaned,

The sweeping of old Time's haphazard broom  
Lies jumbled on the dusty shelves, for gain;

Discarded things of yore,  
Bought now  
From attic nook or mouse infested barn,  
Unearthed from kitchen-middens, found in homes  
Of the conserving poor,  
Where they had crept  
From the contempt of each new modern age.

Called curiosities;  
Yet why?  
If evidence of an incurious world  
Were sought, then here it lies, neglected once  
For Art of newer mint,  
Which found in turn  
Neglect and scorn, as more new Art was coined.

In his creative youth  
Man made  
A hundred fashions, which he tossed aside,  
Drawing such lavish from unhurried days.  
But now, no time for Art, intent on gain,  
Perforce he comes to peddle in his past  
And buy as beauty what he dared disdain.

"Isn't that a lovely plush picture I picked up?" says the hostess. Yes, an interesting little bit of old fashioned, grandmother beauty rescued from the past. But, by searching the studios as eagerly as she had searched the antique dealers, she might have found something as beautiful which would have encouraged a young artist to live and produce yet more beauty.

Nevertheless the cult of "the house beautiful" is on. The women's papers may specialise in beauty instruction, hints



for harmonious homes; but those who write in them do not dare to trust themselves in relation to the future. They cannot afford to trip. It is easier to fan up a craze for the past than to judge, unassisted by tradition, what is good in the present. And yet this craze will be no ill thing in the end. It is of course "standardized." People nowadays will pay more for a chair on its last legs than they will for an equally fine one on its first. They bow down perhaps a little too obsequiously to the writers and authorities. Women's talk of styles, periods, craftsmen, is learned, though sometimes gramophonic; but it is a thousand times better than their talk about their weight or about their servants. And it really is at work creating a sense of conscious beauty. By the time that old chairs give out, women will have educated themselves to perceive the quality of good modern work.

They are cultivating a brilliant sense of relationship in furnishing. And even in the midst of this standardization much individuality is emerging. They are using the old stuff as a medium for expressing a new desire. At last they learn to like the beauty of abstract qualities, to understand the value of a line or of a curve, where twenty years ago they could appreciate only a concrete sign of value. When a person will pay an extra hundred dollars for the line of a curve, her awakened sense of value is something to rejoice over rather than to sneer at.

Some see in the craze only a rearrangement of material values, but it is much more than that. The mere collector cultivates a specialist sense; I am sure that many an art dealer never had a sense of beauty, yet seldom made a mistake. The house sense here has developed into an art of itself, and has been carried to a pitch higher than anything in the domestic arts since the period days. In resurrecting and re-combining the old New England furniture, the Ameri-

can lady has discovered how to make a style. Standardised? Yes. But those old styles, Baroque, Empire, Restoration, Georgian, Dutch, Swedish and so on, were also standardisations. All the great classical arts were standardisations; indeed Man seems to produce his best art in periods of standardisation. Only, today the magazine writer has usurped the functions of Royalty; the pen has proved mightier than the crown.

The wave of taste naturally began from New York; so far it has influenced only the Eastern Coast, to any large extent. Old American furniture is not indigenous to the Middle West or the Pacific. The ripples have hardly spread so far, though they are spreading. Importation is carried on in quantities, though it defeats its aim. Old New England furniture does not fit so congruously into a new, imitation Old-Spanish house. It has an air of artificiality, so that in California the old English style really is a fad of mere commercial stimulus. But a wave of taste, allied to a growing sense of social caste, must have an educational value. Los Angeles will emulate New England one day, but will emulate not by imitation but by precept. New England being old, the old furniture is appropriate; Los Angeles, being new, must seek out beauty in newness. Besides, the old is becoming rapidly exhausted. To imitate costs sometimes more than to create. We feel sure that the next generation may expect a period of fine furniture making, since art has this peculiarity—she is always ready to satisfy a genuine demand by creating the artists fit to supply it.

Consider our conditions. My eyes were glued to the road or were anxiously estimating the sometimes erratic actions of other cars; all my æsthetic appreciations were swamped with anxieties; and, as if I were the helmsman and she the skipper, Jo was steering the course and direct-

ing from the bridge. How can we eulogise Connecticut landscape?

Later we met a tourist on a camp ground and by chance the word fell onto scenery.

"You want scenery?" he exclaimed. "Oh, Boy! You should try Minnesota. I tell you what, two hundred and



NEW ENGLAND VILLAGE

fifty miles without a bend or a hill. That's the kind of scenery I like. Fifty miles an hour and sleep at the wheel."

Well, if such is the measure, the kind of scenery I liked here was that of the villages where the signs read: "Reduce speed to fifteen miles, by order of the law." I rambled through the green bowered villages at my ease, finding in them all of that unexpected flavour which had marked Easyport; the trees shaded the houses and the houses stood back demurely on their green lawns, looking into one another's

side windows and overlooking one another's back yards in an intimate and democratic way which made us feel how strangely secretive we Europeans were in many respects; until it occurred to us that probably this close armed clinging, in a place where privacy was easy, must date from the old pioneer Indian times when the closer you were to your neighbour the closer your scalp seemed stuck to your head. Undoubtedly that intense communal feeling which the American small town exhales is a heritage of old tradition, which dies so slowly; a communism which is even more noticeable in the richer quarters, where large and expensive houses are almost always huddled cheek by jowl, jostling each other's eaves. Along the sidewalks of these green bowered, wooden Arcadias, dignified old grandfathers of the village took the air, courteously crossing the road the better to understand and explicitly answer a stranger's questions about the road.

But, to set off the villages, the towns were horrifying to my inexperienced driving. In addition to the many difficulties of the traffic, Jo, who didn't understand my difficulties, was always crying out that she had just seen something in a shop which we needed, and would I stop at once. Stop? Why, what with all the cars going round us, and what with the cars crossing us, and what with the different traffic signals, and the traffic policemen waiting there to be run over, and the engine which threatened to stall at the slightest error, and the various handles to pull and pedals to push, it was all I could do to keep on going. Stop? The cars clustered at the curbs as thick as flies on a piece of bread and jam. By the time we had come to more quiet places, and to where the cars began to thin off, well, there the town was ended or we were deep in suburbs, but remote from shops.

So, for four days, on we went like the Flying Dutchman, only coming to rest at lonely garages where we could get



tire bursts repaired, or at solitary and garish stalls where we lunched on hot dogs and salted peanuts.

"But why hot dogs?" asked an inquisitive American. "Were there not plenty of inns along the roads?"

Inns, madam? Not what the old word connoted. No hostel for poor man and battered steed, no dingy caravanserais with seedy waiters, where on winter's evenings the old cronies of the district yarned over the fire and brewed themselves hot toddy. The inns of Connecticut were the commercial result of the interior decorators and New England homes. Not antique, of course; only commercial antique, born of imitation and surviving by advertisement. Decorative places, where fake art and sly gin were more important than cookery; or the ladylike tea-shop turned both romantic and bucolic. The roadsides were garish with their crowded advertisements, which not only hid but imitated the direction signs and warning signals. Before a huge "stop" you might halt only to find that it was telling you to stop at "Ye Old Roade House," a mile and a half farther on. A punning humour characterised many of the names, playing on the synonym "in"—Steppe Inn, Kumrite Inn, Wontcha Drive Inn, and so on; or the old English as above with an imitation timbered front to match the title; or a childish kind of mystery was attempted, a would-be-enigmatic single word, gradually expanding into another road house advertisement with its famous and unvaried, "Chicken dinner \$1."

Such were not for us. We ate poor man's food and, besides, we liked hot dogs—especially the mustard.

Competing with the steady ranks of these hostel posters were others even more sprawling—soft drinks, cigarettes, motor cars and pink cheeked ladies preserving their "school-girl complexion" were sure to be massed at every corner on huge boards elevated and strutted above the fields. We



planned a club to discontinue the use of the things thus advertised, to stop them from beautifying the landscape in their own fashion at public expense.

When H. G. Wells published *Anticipations* many of his predictions appeared almost Utopian. Great warring land machines, aeroplanes and immense concrete roads seemed hardly likely to come within the lifetime of living man, if even they should come at all. Concrete roads through the country, what a wild dream; but, in thirty years, not only realised but commonplace. Prophets nowadays have to be mighty sharp to get their prophesies published ahead of the fulfillment. The development of the concrete road has been astonishing. The whole Northeast is practically a network; and great main arteries of traffic are planned, and half completed, from Maine to Florida, from New York to Los Angeles, from Vancouver to San Diego. But so suddenly has this intense development of road building come on the States that we are irresistibly reminded of Spanish lighting, where nothing exists between the electric bulb and the old Roman oil lamp. Here, hardly anything is to be found between the concrete or oil-tar road and the plain track of untampered dirt cut into deep ruts, muddy and usually impassable after rains. The roads are like the little girl in the nursery rhyme:

When they are good, they are very, very good;  
But when they are bad they are horrid.

At first sight the black tar roads seemed more beautiful than the white concrete; if you must find some beauty in a utilitarian affair. The darkness merged without offence, though of course they could never have the naturalness of a plain macadam. But in time we saw with different eyes. The white roads began to please from another angle. They were frank, they had no subterfuge; they were architected

into the country and, holding their unrelenting way across the green, green land, emphasizing the bases of the hills with their strict and positive curves, they gave a welcome contrast and brought a sense of order amongst the fluid shapes of river, field and wood. And so in the end we found them like poetry, like a strong serious rhythm holding down the rich riot of unhampered nature; so that what at first struck with a sense of distaste, from its mere unfamiliarity, became the basis of a new series of observations and contrasted qualities and a source of delight. We are speaking of course, from the artist's point of view.

If you want that of an ordinary man we must refer you to our friend from Minnesota quoted previously:

"Oh, Boy! Two hundred and fifty miles without a bend. Can you beat that?"



#### CHAPTER IV

#### OUR FIRST CAMP GROUND

DETOUR: This frenzy of roadmaking cannot go on without reconstruction and repair. DETOUR: Here we turn you off that broad easy way and divert you to those dirt roads which you despise. DETOUR: But might not adventure lie here off the beaten track, and would not a little bumping, a little dust and even a punctured tire be repaid by a few dimes' worth of adventure? Otherwise, shut up in that glazed

box, driving on day after day, can anything ever happen to you? DETOUR.

This detour was narrow, running between hedges, crossing the bottoms of dips on banks. We, coming down steeply into a dip, saw a car-load of young men in exactly the same situation on the opposite slope. Their car was old, full and apparently nonchalant; legs stuck from it and kicked; arms waved. Considering the animation within, it was travelling fast for the nature of the detour. At the last moment I realised they were not making way for us at the bottom. They came on laughing, joking, probably drunk, not swerving an inch; and, from me, not a toot. I never thought of the dam' horn. We would meet exactly at the bottom of the pinch, where it was narrowest. My hands firmly cramped to the wheel. Seconds remained. The bank was fairly steep; a piece of bogland lay beneath. No more than a fence of rotting wood protected the edge. There were two alternatives: bump or slide, and possibly roll. I suppose instinctively I chose that which would make the least noise.

"Here's for slide," I thought, and swept away several yards of fence. We bounced upon the accumulating pile of rotten wood, lurched to the right, staggered as though about to somersault the bank, but came to rest with two wheels hanging on the edge of the road. "Well, we've dodged the bog at all events," I thought, and leapt out to curse the offenders. The other car had stopped; the driver crawled from it with a disarming smile.

"I'm real sorry," he exclaimed. "You see we got to kiddin' and foolin' and I guess we just didn't see you."

To so open a confession there was nothing to say. The working lads all stood around the car and estimated its situation.

"Might come out," suggested one. "Here, Cap'n, you get inside and we'll push."

The wheels flung out the dirt like an agitated terrier, but the net result was to dig the car in deeper; she sagged a little more dangerously.

The clocks marked about six, knocking off time for the workmen. From both sides the cars of the home going labourers massed thickly along the farm road. Distant horns already began to honk in annoyance.

"Oh, shut up!" cried the boys. "Can't you see there's been a naccident?"

"Get a few more an' we'll lift her out," said a man.

The farmer who owned the fence fetched his big axe and began to chop at the wood accumulated beneath the "Ruin." He only broke the haft and drew away with a sheepish grin. Then, the nearest car was attached by means of a rope. I climbed inside the "Ruin" while Jo and a dozen others stood on the running board to keep the weight as far from the bank as possible. The other car began to back slowly.

"Jump if she rolls," shouted one of the men.

"And what about me?" I thought as I pressed the accelerator.

With a slow surge, like a boat coming over a big wave, the "Ruin" rose back onto the road.

Five minutes later the place was again empty, except for the young, red faced farmer, his wife and ourselves. The farm stood at the top of the hill. Its big barn, with the tall decorative silo, its wooden farm house and trees were pure New England in style; but similar conditions bring out similar devices. Hot summers and hard winters, planks and paint made this farm as like Sweden as it is possible to be. The country was Swedish looking too, the curves of hills and valleys, all green, the wooden farms with their important barns, the wooden villages and the wooden spired churches had a note characteristic of Northern Europe. Only the majestic silos, so striking a feature of American farm archi-



ture, were distinctive—except the lightning conductors.

They tell us that the days of the lightning conductor salesman are over. He used to spin about the country in a vermillion gig with a blood horse. He sold conductors by his very splendour; so magnificent a man could not lie. And his conductors matched him. These were no meagre wisps of wire, inconspicuous utilities climbing unobtrusively above the chimney pots, they were resplendent, worthy of a town hall at the least; six to a barn, four to a farm house, with great globes of gilt blazing back the last rays of the evening sun and with serrated prongs sufficient to scare any thunder-cloud.

But his day is over. A car? What is a car amongst so many cars, even if it is a vermillion one? Why, it might be mistaken merely for the fire inspector's.

We thanked the farmer for the destruction of his axe and fence, but he seemed to think them all in an afternoon's work, wished us good speed and let us go without claiming damages. He and his wife were so simple that we could hardly believe that a thousand cars possibly passed his gate every day. At the side of the yard the tobacco barn gaped, its sides allowing the air to filter through the bunches of big leaves suspended within.

Few of our friends had shewn any envy at our plan of spending a summer in the motor camps of the East. Not one of them had ever tried the experiment nor seemed to wish to do so. Some had passed by the places and had been but poorly impressed by the appearance of the inhabitants. Indeed one old lady, getting news of our proposed trip, had roundly attacked my wife.

"Madam," she protested, "I would have you know that you'll get no true impression of America from those disreputable places!"

She was surely right about the camping ground which we reached that night. We had anticipated it for some miles. Amongst the roadside billboards it had promised us a first night of American romance; our first night as truly of the "footloose." A sophisticated camp ground indeed—water, toilets, electric light—and free! A bit of municipal bait to attract the flies of tourism.

We rode past it unrecognising, and had to turn back. Was this our romance? An open space of scrub grass surrounded by bushes which just separated it from a series of mean, coal begrimed streets where the half-adapted children of half-assimilated immigrants screamed to one another, in mangled English when playing by groups, or in strange dialects when by families. The smoke of bituminous coal lingered in the air, perhaps permanently, and took all the colour out of the dusk; a few rough wooden tables with benches were set under the bushes. The place was deserted; the evening was chill and damp. Romance?

However, perhaps solitude was as well. We had never yet tried the mezzanine floor for sleeping, and so were glad to be able to experiment without criticism. Jo handed in the wooden struts and boards while I crawled about building the floor and with difficulty spreading the blankets and quilts. We clambered into the space left between floor and roof. It was as narrow as a coffin. We pulled the curtains, made from the old dress, rolled about here and there extracting ourselves from our clothes and worming into our pyjamas—worming is the right word; we felt entombed.

Click! The arc-lamp above suddenly sprang into brilliant light. From all the bushes around and from all the herbage within a mile's radius, the mosquitoes and other insects swarmed to greet the glory. Up till now they had not suspected our presence, but that light was like a dinner gong. They fell on the feast so conveniently announced.

We closed the windows to prevent crowding, but enough were inside already.

Anyway, the first night in the open is rarely satisfactory.

Hudson Falls sounds romantic, and perhaps it was when named. Nowadays it is a city of square blocked buildings heralded by a motor tire advertisement recounting its history, which we have forgotten; by a Rotarian sign announcing to all comers when the society dined and where, and a large city boosting board with a municipal "Welcome." Already we had seen other welcomes of a like nature: "Welcome to Wootville"; "Sapburg holds out its hand"; "This is Morontown where welcome waits"; "Gallup Center, the caramel city, if you try us you'll like us." A little too verbose this last for a set of readers who travel at forty miles an hour.

We conjure up an image of the poor members of a Chamber of Commerce in conclave—no, consultation—vainly trying to think out a city slogan which has not been used by some other city within a radius of a hundred miles, vainly seeking for some arrangement of words which will give the passing traveller ever so little a flick. But, strive they never so, the notices repeat one another with so dreary a monotony that the tourist might be tempted to remember that town which had no notice; as he may be tempted to use the product which does *not* advertise.

"You are now leaving Sapburg. Thank you. Call again," exclaims the notice at the exit. Thank you for what? For having hurried through as rapidly as possible; for having broken the speed regulations at every opportunity, when safe; and for having totally failed to find one element in this town which can distinguish it from all the similar boosting towns through which you have passed on your road. For you may be sure that, in contrast to the beauties of the

country, every town which bears its boasting sign is little better than a blot on the landscape; a raw conglomerate without one sign of the creative architect's existence; utilitarian buildings, housing standardized shops and topped by standardized sky signs; edged with standardized suburbs which thin out into realtors' land development areas where pleasant fields are doomed to bear more villas as soon as the real estate sharks can hypnotize a sufficient number of the hopefully gregarious with the prospect of country-life plumbing.

These towns are blots of transition, naturally. No race of human beings could bear to imagine its descendants living permanently in such places. They are ugly, as the first lumps of clay which a sculptor sets up for his statue are ugly. Chamber of Commerce signs are not really welcomes; they are warnings. They should read:

THIS IS SAPBURG. WE ARE JUST AS UGLY AS  
EVERY OTHER CITY ALONG THE ROAD AND NO  
MORE REMARKABLE. BUT, IF YOU WANT TO  
BUY SOMETHING, WE WILL BE OVERJOYED TO  
GET YOUR MONEY. THAT IS WHAT WE ARE  
HERE FOR.

SAPBURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

If some town did determine to adopt that sign for a change? What a kick that would be for the motorists! At last a Chamber would have found something which would be remembered.

Have you ever read the opening scenes in *The Last of the Mohicans*? Then avoid Ticonderoga. Impossible to imagine that here, amongst all these blocks of brick, traffic

signs, cars and factory chimneys, the famous scene of the surrender of Ticonderoga Fort was played amongst powder smoke and scalpings. Nor is it easy, amidst the tamed landscape along the subsequent road, to find a setting for any of the subsequent drama. Such memories of Romance are best left unlocalised.

At least Ticonderoga marked one thing: it marked the limit beyond which the hot dog stall flourished with less fertility. The farther we passed up into the Adirondack mountains, the closer came the woods on either side of the road. I suppose that the very quality of the road surface and the almost park-like appearance of the woods disguised from us the real wildness of these mountains; but to us they looked tame. Here and there in groves below the road were small camp grounds where perhaps an early camper or two had nestled tent and car in the dappled shadow. And here too was the shop for the sale of soft drinks, balsam pillows and those tapering pennants which you could tie on your car to tell all other envious tourists exactly what you had done with your holiday money. And as we went up, now and again a car strung with these fluttering trademarks of travel swooped by. The flags added an air of gaiety to the road and the possession of them often proved that here was a boyish spirit who would greet you as you came with a wave and a cheer of pleasant if transient good will.





## CHAPTER V

### RELIGIONS AT A SUMMER RESORT

LAKE PLACID is set not on Lake Placid itself, but on Mirror Lake, for the village turns its back upon the bigger expanse of water which has given it a name. From Louise's bungalow we looked across at the summer village. It made a half moon round the shores of the still waters which well merited their christening. The limpid surface was little disturbed except by windy gusts and by the ripples from canoes filled with clear voiced girls, who could not always be aware how their tones carried over the water, or who, perhaps, with the frankness of the present generation, did not care anyway. In the night time the big hotels reared their electrically silhouetted bulks from the lumpy hills over the tops of all the lesser lights from terraces of shops and lodging houses.

The big hotel which dominated to the right held Catholics, Irish and South Americans; the big hotel which dominated on the left was almost exclusively Jewish; Lake Placid Club, which faced them both with an aloof air, was severely Protestant. The religions might jostle one another on the pavements, but they would not mix in their hotels.

The main street lay some height above the lake; but near the water's edge, at the far end of dipping gardens, were set the parasite shops—shops which dealt in non-necessities, souvenirs of Lake Placid, ladylike and lettuce lunches; "gifte shoppes" selling the scourings of Europe's handicrafts.

In one of these Louise kept a book shop; an odd, non-competitive, non-coöperative association with a restaurant and a "gifte shoppe." Few of those who came for books ever descended to the gifte shoppe beneath, where one of the charming proprietresses sat at the waterside, and wove on a hand loom; nor did the customers of books or of giftes turn into the restaurant, where the meals were of a strictly non-fattening order, since the female visitors of Lake Placid were engrossed in a policing of their fronts and behinds. After all, isn't the modern figure the beginning of real altruism, since nowadays women would rather give pleasure to other people than indulge their own appetites?

The gay summer crowds which sauntered along the pavements of the village or rode through it in their high powered cars hardly prepared us for the quality of the book shop. These gay girls in summer dresses, with mammas striving to hide the inevitable increases of middle age, these young men in plus fours of pallid grey linen (older men were startlingly absent), did not look a clientele for the kind of literature which Louise offered. Her shelves for the most part held stuff of an unusually high order, the very latest published, special first editions, de luxe editions, modern-

istically illustrated editions, editions signed and numbered by the author, French books illustrated by stencils and so on and so on. Yet Louise sold well. One or two were always in the shop browsing over the biographies or histories or philosophies of the moment. The prices frightened nobody, for Lake Placid was not a place for the economical; and even the rent of Louise's shack, half sliding into the water, was startling to mere foreigners.

A wide difference divides the normal English and American reader. On the whole England reads for relaxation and reads voraciously; the average English reader chooses books below his mental capacity; he likes lazy reading. America reads much more sparsely, but very often above its mental capacity; or does not read at all, unless you call the newspaper reading. England is spending its mental capital; America is investing it. For the light minded, for those who love plot so ardently that they will pursue it through a labyrinth of advertisements, there are the magazines, all head and no tail. For others there is the book that you must bite on a little, the book which everybody is discussing, the book which is being lectured about, the book pushed by the great distributing clubs, the book which some strange fate has made into a best seller; but all of the newest, little of the old. All such books *must* be read, and of such books Louise sold scores; indeed she had to sell some fifty dollars worth of books a day to pay the mere working expenses.

When work was over for the day, she and her assistant canoed across to the ramshackle rustic bungalow with the fantastic rent. It was a two storied place set at a slope, for the waterward foundations had sunk so that we always expected the house to glissade away and to launch itself as a self made ark. There Louise housed us in a garden tent as old as the house; but the weather was rainy so that

usually we had to sleep on the balconies, slewing round to leeward as the wind changed direction.

Our car we left at the side of the road, and for a time did not notice how the carpet was degenerating until it fell to pieces under our feet. We could not imagine what there was in the Lake Placid air so ruinous to carpets, until, visiting a great "camp" on the lake, we were told that the chipmunks came down the chimney to steal the fringes from the rugs for their nests. Often we had leaned over Louise's balcony watching the antics of these little striped squirrel-like beasts all ignorant that through the open windows of our car they were stealing our carpets also.

Lake Placid itself, a much bigger sheet of water than Mirror Lake, was slowly being encircled by the great summer mansions of the rich, which they call "camps."

"Come up to my camp," says the great man modestly; and you find a mansion terraced out of the hillside with eight servants, three cars, two motor speed launches and an ice plant. His one terror is lest any estate within half a mile shall become the property of a Jew.

Lake Placid looks large enough to accommodate all the religions in the world. But already the racial question is becoming acute. The Christians are already complaining that the Jewish are pressing into this millionaire's paradise. "Everyone," says a New York epigram, "has his pet Jew." But if ten different Christians introduce each his pet Jew you have ten Jewish families and the beginnings of a Jewish colony. The Christians will have to seek yet wilder spots for their exclusiveness.

Not that such Jews are the newly rich; those would hardly perceive the delights of camping on Lake Placid, they would much prefer to live in the big hotel on Mirror Lake. No, the families who sully this admirable exclusiveness are Louise's best customers, for, of all the reading done at Lake



Placid in the summer time, three-fourths of the best books are bought by the Jews there. Which is matter for reflection.

But those comfortable Jewish millionaires who did find a lodgement on the shores of Lake Placid had to be careful. They were not only there under the protest of the exclusive camp owners of the Lake but also under the watchful eyes of the Ku-Klux Klan. You could not get them to talk except with sealed doors and whispering lips. For the terror lurked in their very kitchens. Who knew what the stolid faced butler did on his spare evenings or what was the young man who drove the maid out for rides in his car?

Even we, who were neither Jewish nor millionaires, had to be wary about speaking of the Klan; for in Louise's own kitchen the Klan lurked, though in a plump and comfortable guise. Mattie was the maidservant, a big jolly girl of romantic sixteen, with rosy cheeks and curly fair hair, and so sophisticated that she showed a flamboyant delight at exhibiting the bright blue garters on her fat legs. She was a boisterous un-selfconscious product of the social equality which still rules the American countryside. When first engaged, she had, after cooking the supper, seated herself naturally at our friend's table. It was difficult for Louise and her assistant, May, tired out as they were with the long day at the book shop, to prune their conversation to the intellectual level of an uneducated girl of the Adirondacks; and yet more impossible still for them to indicate to her the social differences ruling in more sophisticated orders of society. Either way was to lose their maidservant. Maids were very difficult to get; and anyway they were helps, not maids. So, making a virtue out of the darkness of the nights, they compromised by taking their lunches in the restaurant next to the book shop and sending Mattie home as soon as the supper had been cooked.



At sixteen Mattie was not of course a member of the Klan, but she was a ripe girl and therefore interested in young men, and most naturally interested in the more interesting of the young men, those connected with that romantic organisation, the Ku-Klux Klan. But it was a delicate thing to suggest to Mattie that we would be glad to be sneaked into one of the secret meetings which rumour said the Klan was holding in the lonelier parts of the mountains. We had to hint, to surmise, to wonder, and hope that her intelligence would do the rest.

Mattie was amenable to flattery. She cultivated various vague ambitions, most of which would only have led to the risk of her virtue if followed seriously. But she had a powerful, well pitched voice which made the little wooden cottage quiver as she serenaded the roasting leg of mutton or cadenzaed to the simmering string beans. By praise of this, we made inroads on Mattie's affections; and after Jo had drawn her portrait the conquest was complete. She painted an extra rosiness to her cheeks, an extra blueness to her eyes and extra curl and golden glint in her hair, and wholly deleted two young and promising but superfluous chins.

After this Jo ventured to say in plain words that an entry into a Ku-Klux Klan meeting would be a thrill to us as travellers.

"I'll just see what I can do," said the flattered Mattie. "I'll talk to my young man tonight."

The young man in question had been engaged to Mattie's sister for some years, but the engagement was broken off. However, during his long courting he had become so attached to the family that he seemed reluctant to leave it, and showed a wish to transfer his affections to the younger daughter. Mattie wasn't quite sure whether she wanted her sister's leavings; but she was young, his age impressed,

he gave her candy and frivolous garters and took her for long rides in his car. She encouraged him and used him with the callousness of youth.

But Mattie came back next day with a long face.

"Jim says he ain't going," she announced pouting. "He says that it ain't going to be safe. Them Catholic Knights of C'lumbus is going to bust up the meeting and there may be shooting so he says. But, yer know, that just kinda makes me want to go, don't it you?"

"Isn't there anybody else?" asked Jo.

"Yeh!" said Mattie ruminating. "There's an old feller, a forest guard. He likes me pretty good and he's in with the Klan too; tho' mind you nobody says they is, so don't you say I said he was—"

The next day, accompanied by Mattie, we went in search of the forest guard. After a preliminary skirmish of flirtatious wit, sixty with sixteen, Maggie drew him on one side and, in a secretive voice, told him of our errand. He turned his creased peasant eyes on us in ruminative curiosity; his jaws worked a piece of spruce gum like a miraculous cud. He had, in common with so many of the northern farmers, that gnarled air which art photographers seek in tree pictography; he seemed to have been continuously exposed to harder frosts and harsher snows, to more burning suns and wetter rains and more unrelenting creeds than are the normality of mankind; and all these had shrivelled him within himself so that the outer skin had shrunk and withered onto the pemmican of his core.

"Though, mind you," said the old guard, "I ain't no member of this here Klan."

"Oh, I told Mr. and Mrs. Gordon *that*," said Mattie hastily.

"Tho' mind you I don't say nothing 'gainst the Klan,"

went on the old guard. "No. That's a fine work it is doing. Mark me, sir, that's about the only thing that's going to save this here America out of the claws of the Pope."

"Well, Jim says there'll be shootin'—" began Mattie.

"Shootin'?" took up the guard. "Well, they do say that there may be shootin'."

He peered at Jo with a quizzical air, offering her an escape. I at once told him how, during the war, she had been in the Montenegrin trenches firing a machine gun. His withered eyes lit up as the tale proceeded.

"Now that," he exclaimed when I had finished, "that is somethin' like somethin'. Them's the kinda folks you can 'sociate with."

He held out his hand and his manner changed.

"That Jim o' yours is just a plain piker," he said to Mattie. "I didn' think it of you takin' on your sister's leavin's."

However, he still kept up the denial that he was a member of the Klan; though I suspect that the menace of his wife, whom we could see in the doorway of their little house, was what really deterred him from taking Mattie and us to the meeting. A man walking by with a big horse woke his imagination. With a word of apology he hurried after him.

"That's Nate Wilson," breathed Mattie. "He goes real big in the Klan. If he says yes—"

The two men nodded solemn heads over the grave horse. Presently they turned slowly back.

"This here is Nate Wilson," said the guard. "Not that he is in the Klan, but he goes there to listen to them quite a lot—"

The Klan gathering was to take place in a lonely spot of the mountains some eighteen miles away. Clearly, if we would transport Mr. Wilson, we would save him expense; so,

still insisting on the farce that he was no member, he agreed to pass us in with his authority, and that evening he came to Louise's house for us.

Mr. Wilson belonged to the class of men who have little use for small talk. I could hardly question him on first acquaintance about his Klan activities nor, on this short notice, could I introduce bootlegging or hi-jacking. Indeed, while Mattie was gabbling away in the back of the car, a continuous flood of small village talk, I was at a loss how to get into touch with my companion.

At last a remark about the car loosed his tongue. Today all the old peasant romance has concentrated on the car. The romantic spirit has come to life again. The gentle art of lying has revived and has re-stimulated the flagging pulses of talk. My Klansman soared into the realms of fiction; he drove impossible journeys on pitch black nights in cars without lights and with defective brakes; under his magic hand machinery did things it had never done before.

Once we heard a Portuguese washerwoman sing:

I am not one of those who hold by the truth;  
Since with compelling truth  
Away goes romance, away goes society,  
Away go all the sweeter things of life.

How true that is, how naïve.

The road lay down stream-cut valleys, sometimes along gorges. It was a typical road through scenic mountains, which is to say that the trees clipped it in on either hand so close that there was nothing to admire except an occasional glimpse of running water below. Even here in the Adirondacks, where in Leatherstocking's day the naked savage played "scalp me-scalp you" with the white man, the clamorous notices of restaurants, coffee-shoppes, chicken din-

ners, antique dealers, soft drinks and gasoline spotted the tree trunks with the blatant flowers of advertisement.

A large notice announced:

TURN HERE TO HUDSONVILLE, THE  
WELCOMING CITY

and here we turned, but Hudsonville proved to be untrue on both counts; it was not yet a city and its welcome was confined solely to its notice board.

Gradually we found ourselves merged into a procession of cars travelling the country roads at some thirty miles an hour. No need any longer for the directions with which the Klansman at my elbow had interrupted his romancing. At last the procession slowed and congealed toward a gate in the side of the road where men peered suspiciously beneath car hoods and, at the response of a whispered word, passed car after car through the guarded entrance. Our turn came at last; there was even no need to whisper; our Klansman had only to show his face at the opening and we were waved on.

The dusk had just fallen. Over ridged grass dotted with ambushed rocks and boulders we picked our way and at last set the "Ruin" in line with the gathering cars. Now we could get out and stare about us.

The setting was not unimpressive. The field of meeting was slightly bowl shaped. From the edge the ground fell away, producing a deep sense of isolation, since, over the low crest, only miles of dusking air separated us from the faint blue peaks of the surrounding but distant hills. Already on the edge of the rim a half circle of cars had gathered; ere the meeting was over the whole circle was almost complete. Through the dusk I perceived these cars in a wholly new guise. The last light from the fading sky



caught the parabolic mirrors of the headlamps, which lit of their own reflection like a host of glittering eyes; in some cases the colored number plates, and in other cases the steel bumpers made grotesque mouths drawn beneath the eyes; the curving ends of the front fenders became paws and, from the low perspective, the coachwork of the cars



KU-KLUX KLAN

humped into sombre bodies, so that in a flash all these lurking machines were transformed into a crescent of watching and monstrous brutes.

A car now staggered into the bowl and flung out a pile of shapeless white, from which the clustering men, with surreptitious haste, picked out their shrouds, quickly enveloping themselves in the Klan's grotesque incognitos. Then, with their high pointed hoods nodding over the grim, white, loop-holed masks, the Klansmen, transformed from farm

hands into strange anachronisms from the middle ages, lurched off to their duties. But no disguise could conceal the clumsy farm walk inbred by a score of years of ponderous booting and of sticky soil. Now the strange quality of the picture was heightened by contrast; almost a picture by Doré to illustrate some unwritten *Inferno*—the black beasts and the white ghouls, the first, the product of this new mechanical age, Erewhon's ogres; the second, resuscitated nightmares of a crisis when a beaten minority had to dominate by anonymous terror a newly enfranchised, exultant but hysterical slave race.

Darkness fell on this dramatic vision, which was soon replaced by another. A faint mist had seeped up from the ground and in this the lighted headlamps of the cars shone like the long blades of burning swords. The ground was ridged and, as car after car came into the field, maneuvering for a place in the ever closing circle, these swords crossed and recrossed as though some godlike duel were in progress. The lights crossed and recrossed, disengaged, came at it again, slashed and cut with good old broadsword work. And then, as each car found its place and shut off the light, it seemed as though that one had died and had dropped its *Excalibur* to the ground. But the bugle notes of the motor horns called up yet more combatants till all the air was full of a maze of swinging and slashing sabres.

The circle of cars was concentrated towards one truck dressed as a platform around which the Klansmen and the uninitiated began to assemble as they left their own vehicles. Suddenly a loud voice cried out:

"White caps to the rear. Men are trying to break in at the back."

A force of ghouls marched across the bowl and faded into the gloom. We waited for a clash of conflict between the Klansmen and their deadly enemies, the Knights of Colum-

bus; but no sound broke the tense stillness except the honking of the cars. Still, the feeling of tension was not dismissed for in spite of the strict policing of the gates, and the guards at other possible means of approach, almost every one expected the threatened irruption and a possible battle. No doubt on the side of the Knights were members as typical as our late cicerone, as ill prepared for tolerance, and as ready to show zeal by physical violence.

It has been said that the Klan is losing power in the South but here in the North it has abrogated its original object of scaring Negroes, and now concentrates its secret maneuvers against the menace of the ever crimson Pope. Under this guise its power has been enormously increased in the Northern States, especially in New England.

Few outside of the New England States are aware of the rapid increase of the Catholic element in the old stronghold of Puritanism. The cause is primarily economic. Compared with what contents a European, the American demands an enormous return for his toil. Now, from the North, sift in the Canucks; while from the East come all the European hordes, Latins, Slavs, Germanics, mixtures and mongrels; frugal, popish and clannish.

The New England farmers find the New England acres a slow drudge; but the immigrants, coming from the overpopulated peasant life of Europe, see in New England a life of comparative leisure. So the coarse living, hard sleeping, hard working immigrant is now starving the old time farmer from his hereditary acres. In consequence, almost a half of the population of Massachusetts is now Catholicised, and over the whole of New England the proportion of the dreaded religion amounts to nearly a third.

There is little cause for wonder then that the Ku-Klux Klan, with its romanticism, pageant, secrecy, and sense of

hidden power, its ghoulish costume, midnight rituals and fiery cross, awakened not only the peasant's sense of the dramatic, so obviously lacking in his life, but also stirred up those feelings of fear which are potent in the regimenting of democratic Man. The image of the terrible Pope, with all the juicy epithets which were invented for him during the clash of the Reformation, this clawed and mitred monster waiting to grip America to his conscience-stifling bosom and destroy the central stronghold of all free religion, was used to arouse the half slumbering Puritanism to convulsive gestures of hate and repudiation.

Over the driving hood of the truck a big cross was staged. It was no longer, alas, the flaming, burning cross which distinguished the old Klan initiations, but an affair of ruby tinted electric bulbs; perhaps symbolic of a change which had come over the organisation, the passionate crackling energy of repudiation passing into the cold, mechanical, subservient society; its secret energy calculable by units and controlled by the switch of a master mind.

And under the heatless glow of that ruby cross the speakers stood and talked. The speeches were hardly remarkable, except for the crude kind of exaggeration necessary to influence the slow peasant mind. Shadowy Klansmen stood aloft in the night and bellowed crudities at the sea of faces which, pinkly reddened by the glow from the cross, yearned open mouthed upwards.

A letter culled by the watchful Mr. Mencken for his *Mercury* gives the gist of the arguments better than we can reproduce them from memory.

"It Seems funny dosent it that some one is always trying to kill the goose that seemingly layes the golden egg now I have read quite a few articles in the *Tampa Morning Tribune* in the past few days about the Catholic church and



that we are about to face a regin in this country if the Hon. Al Smith is nominated to the Presidency race that will be pulled in the near fytur or thereabouts now it dont seem possible that a Nation that is more than two thirds protes-tants would think for one second of trying to put a man like Smith up for President in this land of ours that is supposed to be a free country dont they know that a catholic does not believe in Jesus Christ but dont believe that any one who does is in their right mind dont they know that anyone who takes the oath of a Catholic is not only swearing his life away to this religion if that is what you could call it any stretch of the imagination but he is also swearing that he hopes all kind of damnation will befall his soul if he dosent do exactly as the Pope in Rome tells him to do and not what anyone in this world tells him to do outside this supposedly super being in Rome do they know that they are fixing to place a country that was raised directly against this kind of thing in the hands of Jeporday (is that spelled right) well do they know that some of the vowes taken by a Catholic is even though we have to go into the wombs of the unbeliever (or that is to say the protestant) woman and dash the Infants head out even before it is born we shall do well so we shall do anything it makes no difference how dasterdadly and beyond all else get the protestants out of the way Damm their rotten souls may they rot in filth and die in slime for they ere not with us so they must be against us, may they be all kinds of things happen to them may theu die from all kinds of filthy sickness may they be crippled maimed blind parlyzed may they suffer all manner and kinds of terrir so that we (the Catholic) can destroy them off the face of the earth the dirty swine eaters. now just think of putting a man like that at the head of this Government.

“SAM JONES.”

A pair of ghouls in white cerements threaded their way through the crowd, flickering hand flashlights into the staring



faces, scrutinising each through emotionless eye holes, giving no sign, and passing on. It is difficult to describe the feelings aroused by the sightless stare of that blank un-human mask under the glare of the torchlight; and if it affected even us, who saw the thing as merely menacing mummery, what must have been the emotion in the hearts of that simple country folk, highly susceptible to all forms of external show?

A woman speaker now stood up, the best woman speaker from the South. In concession to her sex, she was shrouded in white satin, which somehow gave to the mummery a last touch of absurdity. For a long and calculated moment she stood there, a blank faced and sexless shape leaning over the expectant audience. Suddenly with a dramatic gesture, throwing back a mask which uncovered a face fleshily energetic rather than spiritually exciting, she roared out her opening words in a voice which was the exact counterpart of the face.

It is unjust to demand accuracy from a propagandist speaker; nevertheless, we were surprised at the strength of the statements manufactured for these country folk. In spite of cars and radios, the American peasant is still unbelievably in the backwoods; all his reading and writing and listening in does not make him a whit more mentally up to date than the illiterate Spaniard, and leaves him far behind the country Frenchman. These farmers gulped in all the old images of the Pope, with the threat of the Inquisition still hanging over their heads. The stake and red hot pincers waited round the corner for them. Against the threatened secret dominance of the priest they were trying to muster the secret dominance of this white-robed terror. Naturally the speaker did not invoke this terror; she painted the Klan as though it were the most liberal of gentle persuaders. But between the possible idealisms of the leaders

and the crude expression of the rank and file loomed a wide gap.

The unlucky alien, having fled from a land where poverty, taxation and military needs stultify life in all directions, would find here not Liberty holding out a welcoming hand but the shadowy menace of the Ku-Klux Klan. So that either he must have revised his definition of Liberty, or must keep his mouth closed.

Naturally the possible Presidential candidature of Al Smith, Catholic Governor of New York, was the chief mark for all the speaker's attack. She dissected his career with a ruthless tongue. His criminal leniency towards the violators of the Volstead Act provoked wild cheers and hoots from the very men who, a minute earlier, had themselves been joking and passing round hip flasks and bottles of bootleg. She also said that if Al Smith were elected President every Protestant child in the States would be automatically declared illegitimate. This worked up enthusiasm to such a pitch that the car owners rushed to their machines and applauded with a tumult of horns.

Suddenly drawing herself to her full stature she cried out:

"They tell me that some dastard here, incited by the priests, is ready to shoot the speaker tonight. If such there is, I open my bosom for his bullet."

She stood with her arms stretched wide in an attitude of crucifixion.

"Fire, fire dastard," she screamed. "If you wish a martyr here is one ready."

We waited a full thirty seconds for the crack of the complaisant pistol. Then the tense silence dissolved into a pandemonium, shouts, screams, yells, whistles, horns and hooters augmenting the applause won by that noble gesture.

After this the meeting could surge no higher. It became

a mere touting for new membership. Across the field long lines of men and women formed up, ready to pay fifteen dollars each for the privilege of saving the United States from the maw of the Pope and holding the home bulwarks against Anti-Christ. One of these applicants was certainly negroid.

But already things are changing.

The Klan has already thrown away its mask, it will stalk no longer in secret terrorism. Possibly we saw one of the last of the official masked meetings. To predict the future of the Klan is difficult. Doubtless this new move may attract to the Klan a number of sympathisers of better class and more responsibility, but popular movements of this nature do not need either class or responsibility. Respectable and in the open, the Klan will lose a half of its dramatic value and, with its dramatic value, much of its power over the uncultured mind. Would our bullet headed guide have joined the Klan simply to have a swipe at the distant Pope? Not he. He had joined because of the mask. Fundamentalism and religious fanaticism are already weakening in the States, yet the anonymity and pageant of the Klan might perhaps have had power to awaken the slow passions of the soil to a new era of religious persecution in that atmosphere of drama and mystery. By throwing away the drama and mystery it is safe to predict that half of the influence of the Klan over common minds has also been discarded.

And yet the Ku-Klux Klan, crude though it was in expression, and seemingly illegal and often criminal in its procedure, does indicate in its new form a problem which in future years may split America in a new political schism—a split due to religions and inherited culture and not, as at present, to an almost wholly fictitious political difference. (We have not yet found anyone who can convince us of any

fundamental difference between Republican and Democrat.) A division may come between the Roman Catholic Latin and the Protestant Nordic—with the Negro taking advantage of whichever promises him the best terms. The old American fundamentalism is dying, poisoned by its own absurdities, by the new outlook of youth, and by the automobile. Revivalism is too crude to hold any but the emotionally unstable and the uneducated; and general Protestantism has lost its bite, due to division and multiplication of the churches, village poverty, and a vulgarisation and commercialisation of the dignity of the church and gospel. Already, in New England, California and Louisiana, the Catholics are in considerable force. They count about a fifth of the nation, more or less, and Mexicans are still pouring into the South West. Last year the Catholic church gained 34,000 converts from the Protestants and, with the increase of æsthetic and emotional instability induced by modern life, these numbers are increasing every year.

Although the expression "Claws of the Pope" is absurd, and any idea of halting a natural growth by force of terrorism has been proved historically ineffective, the opposition of the Klan to Catholicism was the foreshadowing of a possible struggle which may tear America. In view of a certain rashness of action which marks the American temperament under certain kinds of opposition of emotionalism (lynching, treatment of Socialists or labor agitators, third degree, race riots, etc.) this struggle may develop into a bitter and even sanguinary conflict. On the one hand the tremendous merging force of Commercialism may blend the different elements before the parties have a chance to become of sufficiently equal numbers to engage in a serious struggle. But, on the other, organisations such as the Klan, by deepening the rift and holding it open, may counteract the work of commercial interest and bind the Latins and

other immigrant Catholics firmly together with the tremendous cohesion of the Church behind them. We may see the struggle yet.

It was some time before we could find our Klansman in the crowd, for, *imprimis*, he had to return to normalcy and shed his cornucopia. However, at last he reappeared in the light of the motor lamps, and we joined the home going procession. By this time the fog had thickened. Our headlights flattened against the mist and could not light up the road or even illumine the edge of it. So all I could do was to cling to the tail light of the car in front, and follow as closely as I dared. Every other driver in the procession knew the road by heart, as it wound up and down along the gulleys and ravines, with a steep bank on one side and a long drop on the other. Most of the other cars had four wheel brakes but the "Ruin" had but two, and the brake drums well worn; nor had I ever driven in the night before.

I wonder what would have been the feelings of our Klansman had he clearly understood in what jeopardy his life was during that drive. I only know that I reached Lake Placid at last with a sigh of real relief, dropped Mr. Wilson and Mattie at their respective homes and rolled back at our own pace to the cottage by the shores of Mirror Lake.

Before leaving the Adirondacks we made a pilgrimage to the tomb of John Brown. When we first heard it spoken of we failed to connect it with the man who made his name immortal at Harpers Ferry, but we found that it was indeed the tomb of the old rebel who tried to accomplish the reformation of a nation single-handed.

They brought old Osawatomie Brown up from his despised grave by Charlestown, and here he lies with the bones of his illumined adherents. A great rock on which he carved



his adolescent initials serves as his headstone, and a few shrubs surrounded by a ring fence is his cemetery. Nearby, the old Brown Homestead has become a catch maw for pious visitors and a bazaar of artless souvenirs and those tapering pennants which decorate the cars of tourists.

A bold and serene landscape falls on every hand from the crest where the old abolitionist now sleeps, yet somehow it is not an appropriate setting for his last resting place. The hero of the most popular American song yet written should lie in some craggier spot. It were better if they had taken him to that Harpers Ferry which he made so notorious, rather than drag his bones back to this sentimental seclusion so far from where one might expect to find him that we were reluctant to identify this John Brown with the one whose spirit has marched along with every modern English speaking regiment which has ever sung as it foot slogged (except of course the soldiers of the Southern Confederacy).



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CAMP GROUNDS OF NEW ENGLAND

TRUE freedom is the reward of competence, which holds good no matter what branch of affairs it concerns—marriage, free love, art or car driving. So, having gained a competence in rumbling round the village of Lake Placid, with no more mishap than running into the tail light of a sudden stopper, we set off for Rouses Point and the Canadian border with a heightened sense of that “footloose” quality which was all that we asked. We were feeling satisfied with our visit for, apart from the Ku-Klux Klan meeting, we had profited financially. The kind ladies keeping the restaurant and book shop had allowed us to hang our pictures round their walls. We had sold—once, as we were putting the pictures up, to a lady of sensibility who would not ask me the price because she said I looked so idealistic that she dared not discuss so sordid a thing as money with me; once, as

we were taking them down, to a Jewish family who evidently failed to perceive this idealistic quality in us. We came to the conclusion that the bustle of hanging had stimulated buying at these two extreme moments; had we been wiser we should have spent all our time putting the pictures up or taking them down. Their mere quiescent presence on the walls stirred nobody to possessive eagerness.

Along the big road which borders the famous Lake Champlain we turned northward. Almost all the cars which met us now carried beflagged notices, pasted across their windshields, "Guest of Canada" or "Guest of the United States," temporary permits of passage across the approaching frontier. But, though tempted, we did not venture into Canada. The back of our car was piled high with suit cases, bedding, painting materials, pictures, musical instruments, camping necessities; the idea of the customs officers hunting through all these in search of a possible bottle of bootleg whisky daunted us.

At Rouses Point we stopped to take the ferry and there heard a family, bathing from the stony shores, talking to one another in that old French patois which is still the current language for these erstwhile French colonists. Here were the natural bugaboos of the Ku-Klux Klan, and that pretty girl in her skin-tight green bathing dress, diving so gracefully into the steely water from an improvised spring board, was maybe no more than a luscious snare of the Pope for some tottering young St. Anthony of Nordic fundamentalism.

We crossed two arms of the lake in primitive ferry scows. Evening was coming on apace. The road was lonely, not even a farm house where we could turn into the yard. Choosing this moment the clutch began to slip and I was

ignorant how to tighten it. Competence is freedom. The road was hilly; we crawled up one or two steepes with the engine threshing on the lowest gear; another hill would have stopped us. At that moment we saw at a fork in the road a gasoline station and a hot dogger.

"A'm yoost closing up for de night," said the immigrant in charge, "but you can put your tent op in de field to de back if yer wants. Garache? Dere's a garache 'bout mile an' a half along."

He pulled down his shutters and lurched away, an uncommunicative man. With the darkness a drizzle had begun to fall. We gazed at each other dismally.

"Is this touring in America?" we asked ourselves. "Are such the adventures of the car camps?"

Depressed in mood, we began to set up the sleeping floor; now a new problem beset us, the rain. We had not taken that into account. So many of our friends had assured us of permanent sunshine and dryness that we had been wondering rather how we could endure the possible stuffiness of such an enclosed space. In childhood one of my particular horrors had been descriptions of coal miners working in narrow seams; and now the attempt to set up the floor, without turning the bedding out into the rain and without soaking ourselves, brought back too poignant a memory of childish horrors. Of course we did get wet, and everything was as wet as we. The blankets, quilts and planks beneath all exuded a faint and sticky damp. The misty drizzle drifted in through the windows and they too had to be closed. There we lay in the damp darkness gently stewing in a fog strongly tainted with emanations of oil and gasoline which seeped in from the warm engine and the overheated clutch.

"Coffin," I growled. "We are buried alive."

Next morning I said to Jo:

"That thing isn't merely a ruin; it's worse. It's a hearse. Black paint and black silk curtains and like a coffin. It's merely a dam' hearse."

"And yet," said Jo, "it has a certain air of gaiety, especially as it is wabbling along the road. Let's call it the 'Happy Hearse'."

So we emptied a bottle of Coca-Cola into the radiator as a christening present and the good old sun rose upon the simple ceremony as a godfather.

There is much more of New England than you may expect; six hundred miles from top to bottom and about two hundred across comprises a big bit of ground.

From St. Albans, where the christening took place, we drove to Enosburg; but don't know if it was named after the famous fruit salts or not. At Enosburg a missionary of the Chamber of Commerce gave us a map and headed us through Hazen's Notch—and the car could just do it—to Lowell.

Just outside of Lowell there was a place by the roadside, on the one hand a resplendent hot dogger, on the other a travellers' rest or bide-a-wee. There was a lawn set with a curious game, as if the child's Noah's Ark had turned sporty and had gone in for golf, to the side of which a couple of tables stood under vivid umbrellas. There was space below our belts, and curiosity above, so we stopped, backed and demanded something to eat. A trim maidservant handed us a menu, the first poetic menu we have had to choose from.

The hand that makes us famous  
Or the hand that seals our fate  
Is the hand that does our cooking  
When we come to man's estate.



Said the cover in a doggerel paraphrase of Brillat-Savarin. The hors d'œuvres, which included such interesting curiosities as Salmon Wiggle and English Monkey, were headed:

The frivolous work of polished idleness.

For sweets:

The tender morsels on the palate melt  
And all the force of cookery is felt.

Over tea and coffee originality stumbled:

The cup that cheers but does not inebriate.

We chose modestly from under

Chief nourisher in life's feast

a mere sandwich.

As we sipped our coffee, the proprietor, and (are we misjudging him?) poet, came out of the house, walking through the Noah's Ark obstacles towards us.

He was a Vermonter—"And proud of it though you couldnt say that Vermont is like it used to be. Ottermobiles have altered all that. Wonderful education, ottermobiles. Why, time was when a Vermonter used to think that a fellow who was born outside the State of Vermont was practically a throw away. But travelling round in a car, why he'd find to his surprise that in other states there were folks just as good as Vermonters, yes, he would, and maybe some of them some better than Vermonters, at least than all of them at all events."

The patriotic man had to modify—he knew in his soul that nothing could equal a good Vermonter.

"Why now," he went on, "I just come back myself from that Vermont train trip. Didn't you know of that? Train full of Vermont products, pictures of our scenery, show them

other states what Vermont is, publicity campaign. Talking and lecturing—oh, a great success, telling those down away states about Vermont. Well, if you like to call it that way, boosting, see. We got some good lecturers too but—

“When we got down to St. Louis I had a queer kind of sensation. Y’know I felt kind of—ashamed. Why, I thinks to myself, here we are talking big about Vermont in a town that’s got more population than all the State of Vermont. Why, they might kind of laugh at us. That’s the way I felt; because some of them fellows talked kind of big. Well, we had a minister aboard the train; good speaker too, but a Canadian. So I says: ‘You put the minister on to talk here.’ They says: ‘But he isn’t even a Vermonter.’ An’ I says: ‘That’s why.’ I couldent tell them they was talking a bit foolish maybe in such a big place, but I held on and I got my minister talking that night. Say, do you know what he said to those fellows at St. Louis? He says: ‘Why do we come along here cracking up Vermont? It’s because we want your money; and you know it.’ That’s what he says, straight out to them. And say, it went fine. Surprised them. Then he made a good sensible speech and they listened. Why, them fellows from St. Louis liked it a lot better than if he had said that Vermont was the next place God made when he’d learned how from the Garden of Eden, which was about how those other fellows were putting it.”

The wise Vermonter had opened this “Bide-a-wee” from bitter experience. He had travelled a lot and, as he went, had made notes of what he found missing from all the other lodging houses. Here was the ideal.

We suppose that to remedy a lack of the poetic in everyday life was one of the reforms he had undertaken.

Newport—Here, standing above the town and Lake Memphremagog, we looked across to Canada, a mere five

miles or so away. The day was ideal for viewing mountain scenery. The sky was mottled with clouds which, steering slowly west, rolled great blocks of shadow across the planes of hill and lake. Ripe sunlit greens, blue and purplish shadows, sky reflections and glitter undulated over that richly accidented landscape, lending it drama and depth which it would have lacked under a serener sky. The land came alive; hills hiding unsuspected in deep shades sprang suddenly up as glistening cupolas; crests sharply drawn in sunlit ridges were as quickly drenched and drowned in striding cobalt gloom; a huge wave-like movement seemed to surge across as though the land, having borrowed half of the shadows' gallop, was rushing to meet them and had become a high, tempestuous sea with waves a hundred times as huge as men could think of.

We rested in the "Happy Hearse," entranced.

Shall we go into Canada after all? we debated.

But we knew that it was only the delusion of distance. Nothing could charm that vision into closer reality. Near at hand the splendour would disintegrate to slopes, pieces of woodland, small farms, houses and water like what we had at our elbows. The only essential difference was that there the Vermonter would become a Canadian and we might drink a glass of real beer without risking the vengeance of a nation.

The steering clouds became thicker and rain escorted us clear to the coast, passing us through the White Mountains so that all we saw of them was the agitated oscillation of our windshield wiper. Once, when a terrific thunderstorm crashed onto us, with lightning apparently bounding off the adjacent hilltops, we stayed at a mountain refreshment house to watch a little bear drink bottle after bottle of pop. Our old "Hearse" was too metallic, and its name too ominous; so

we sat out the storm in that place with the telephone ringing clamorously all the while, a message from space. And on leaving we gave the bear a last bottle of pop, which it drank as if to our good healths, holding up the bottle between its paws.

We drove on and on—town and country—good roads and bad—concrete or washboarding—here a village, there a town—woods—fields—all flowing by, running down the window panes like photographs when the gelatine is just melting—we, sitting there in the leaky old “Hearse,” wet to the knees by the rain forced through the cracks and joints of the old body.

One day, two days—until, in a last terrific downpour, we came out into the wilds of the Maine coast, sloshing over deep rutted side tracks to the farm owned by friends, where the welcome was as warm as the big hearth fire before which we steamed out the recollections of the last two days of touring in America. And next day the sun came out strongly to dry up the results of his delinquency!

Here Billy and Marguerite and their two children lived during the summer months in a cosy Bohemia of overalls. Billy sculpted and milked the cow; Marguerite cooked and embroidered the most amazing bed spreads; the children ran wild; their nearest educated neighbour was a famous sculptor eight miles away. And Billy’s car was even more disreputable than the “Hearse”; its fenders hung in tatters and flapped; its body was dented out of shape; its doors were tied with string; even the street boys turned to look at it, amazed that such a wreck still ran.

They had bought their farm for two thousand dollars, all hard earned with art. No interior decorating here. The estate ran out to the sea in a small rocky prominence from which we dived into the crisp Atlantic. A quarter of a mile farther up the inlet was the herring trap, a geometrical shape

of fisherman's fencing stretching out into the water. Half a mile still farther up were the quay, and the fishing village, lobster pots and store, but few gasoline boats. The coast of Sweden is far more modernized.

At first the fishermen had looked askance at the artists' coming, little aware that they were the harbingers of future prosperity. The "how" runs this way. First, comes the artist seeking out a simple solitude where he can work all day, dress at his unconventional ease, live as he likes and "to hell" with society. To one artist another is always added until, in compound interest, an artists' colony has been formed. Then come the hangers-on of art, enthusiastic parasites, sometimes with money, always with gush; the rich romantics bring richer but less romantics who in turn bring richest but unromantics. Land values sky; realtors advertise. Long before this the peasants have sold out at a profit and gone. Now, in the sight of the millionaire, the artist, shabby fellow loving shabby things, is an offence. Clear him out. So, last of all, he goes too. "Thank goodness those low fellows have gone," the millionaires congratulate themselves. "How clever of us to have discovered this delightful spot."

At Ogunquit, at Gloucester, you may see the thing happening now.

Here it had already begun; two artists within eight miles of one another, and a third just moved in. Compound interest mounts up extraordinarily fast.

At present this place still lives in its old simplicity. The sheriff and the local bootlegger play hide and seek in the coastward woods and thickets; the sheriff hopeful, the bootlegger elusive as a peewit. The old fellow who did Billy's odd jobs had been twice condemned for rape, but took his past ill luck philosophically; now, too old to be a passionate menace, he is shocked at the freedom of the visitors' summer



dress which sometimes goes to extremes. One lady visitor wore only a sleeveless blouse, a pair of short running trunks and socks—lucky for her the raper was past his prime! The old Irish woman who did their chores had in her youth escaped to America from the too pressing attentions of a young man; he had followed her here, persuaded her to marry him after a six years' courtship, and had ill treated her during the course of her married life. True stories have an odd twist sometimes.

We camped at Bar Harbor between a pair of Indians selling baskets and Buffalo Bill's adopted grandson.

"The United States Inter-State Highway, No. 1," is to run from the north of Maine to the south of Florida, an unbroken line of some three thousand miles, eventually all concrete. On it we drove from Bar Harbor to Boston. It hugs the coast as closely as convenient, and here at last we found the camp grounds and the campers.

The distribution of the camps seemed to follow no law. We found them scattered with little reference to scenic value or suitability of place. A beautiful site would be devoid of a camp for several miles on either hand; a wretched spot might have three or four in close and bitter competition. Few were inviting æsthetically; they were merely pieces of open flat field with a row of cabins like hen houses at the back, a toilet and perhaps a store which might serve primitive sandwich meals and rank coffee.

The names by which the owners tried to attract attention to these hopelessly unattractive places were hardly descriptive—"Rainbow Camp," "Roseland Camp,"—they always looked empty and how they paid the expense of building was problematic. Anyone who had a piece of land near the road had apparently made a camp ground there, perhaps moved by the fact that somebody else close at hand had built

a camp ground with success. But, in spite of the art development in the newly reorganised farm houses of the holiday-making New Yorkers, the New England middle class have yet to learn the selling value of beauty. In almost every case when a camp was popular it was set in some favourable locality. One was in a grove by the sea; another was lined along a bathing beach; another was placed in a city park. Camps such as these were always filled, and yet as we rode along the coast we saw many a similar site left ignored.

These numerous camp grounds, for there were a large number, do not really prove an extraordinary enthusiasm here for the out of door life; they were rather a compromise between pocket and need of movement. Perhaps one quarter of those who used the camps really loved the experience of a camping holiday, but the rest were not very proud of being found on a camp ground. They were the product of two factors: first they had a car, secondly they had a holiday. The result of car + holiday is: thirty-five miles an hour from daybreak to sunset, piling impression onto impression at as rapid a speed as possible so that in the memory nothing remains but the few objects of nature's facetiousness which are usually photographed in the tourist folders—the rock like an Indian's face, the waterfall in seven stories, the boulder which is shaped like a frog, and so on. Amongst such holiday makers we often found an unexpected division of taste according to the sex; the one who liked camping was the woman; the one who hated it was the man. He often seemed to regret his office and his comfort, in spite of the comfort he carried with him. The purse, in the end, dictated. They camped merely because they could not afford hotels.

Of the remaining quarter, which really enjoyed camping, a large number belonged to what—since America dislikes

the cleavage into Upper and Lower—we will call the Ford-class. And a charming class they were; bluff, easy natural manners, always ready to be helpful, and superior to minor considerations of money.

Jo was so used to smiling and nodding to any of the general fraternity of campers that one day, halted at a grade crossing barrier, she was amazed to get no returning smile from a lady in the car drawn up alongside of us; indeed, the reverse of a smile, a look of astonished disdain.

"The occupants of a 1920 relic, and battered at that," I pointed out, "do not smile at the occupants of a 1927 Marmon. That is unless they condescend to smile first."

"Well," she declared, "give me the Ford-class."

An essential difference between the American and the English is the attitude toward financial poverty in persons of talent or education. Here there is no romanticism in poverty; it is not admirable nor is it considered amusing; whereas an artist in England is hardly ever made conscious of his poverty and, indeed, sometimes enjoys an added lustre if he does not strain to sell his work or earn money. The possession of a bathroom in glazed china-ware adds not a penny to his lustre; and a duke can be invited with impunity to an attic, and there be served tea in a chipped cup. On the other hand, America shows not so much a non-existence of class consciousness as a determination on the part of the Ford-classes that a class consciousness shall not become important. This attitude does merge all classes in an atmosphere of easy geniality, and the communicable humanities. Now and again one may enjoy the spectacle of a well to do man preparing to repulse a too intrusive familiarity; but even this has, as a rule, to be done with tact. The "sniff direct," such as Jo received, can be delivered only when human contact has not been previously established. Under

the influence of this common humanity American manners have grown up to fit and have developed into a genial though sometimes curt helpfulness—deeds more than words—occasionally disconcerting to those who had been accustomed to words rather than deeds.

This easy, good natured democracy ruled the camps. The possession of a car was enough to frank you into camp society. A camper bowed and greeted any other camper; and equality included the well-to-do in his Packard, with a trailer, and the pair of lads cutting loose on a 1918 flivver. To enter a camp was to accept camp conditions; so that at the basins, Jo, washing her head, might find alongside a man shaving and explaining to her through the lather the influence of the automobile on road graft; while a woman, rinsing her children's underclothes on the other side, was discussing the relative duties and pleasures of the male and the female in this camping business, or even discussing the subject of comparative religions with some signs of study. You never knew what you might hear at the wash basins or other places where campers congregated.

"Abandon snobbery all ye who enter here," might have been written up over the gates. The atmosphere of the camps was good, and perhaps the choleric lady, who so attacked us for looking at America through camp grounds, might have been surprised to learn that some of our very best impressions of the country were gained in them.

The campers were split into three almost definite sections. There were (1) married couples in the twenties with one or two children; (2) older couples from the forty-fives up to the seventies who had been looking forward (in a way) to the freedom which would come to them when the last daughter had been married and the last son had been placed in business; and (3) the groups of jolly soiled lads packed into some battered fenderless flivver, rescued from the

wrecker's yard for a ten dollar note. The license plates of some twenty-eight states offered a sample of various segments of the nation, from the ex-cattleman from Wyoming, who moralised over the contrast of the brutalities and the humanities of the cattle business, to the girl music student ordered to spend the summer in the open because of a suspected weakness in the lungs.



Though sometimes the fixed appurtenances of the camps might be rough, the luxury in which the campers themselves traveled was astonishing to us. But with a car there was no reason to go without comfort unless for the spiritual benefit of living hard for a period; judging from the average equipment there was little voluntary asceticism in the everyday citizen—asceticism can look so uncommonly like poverty; an appearance to be avoided at all costs. There were tents of all sizes and shapes, or trailers which opened out into commodious bedrooms, folding beds, chairs and



tables, even arm chairs, camp stoves with two or three burners, ice boxes fixed to the running boards, gallon vacuum jugs, radios, gramophones and anterooms to the tents, with mosquito protection—so that camping in New England seemed indeed little more than taking the whole house out of doors.

The best of the camps we visited was placed near the borders of Maine and New Hampshire. It was in a pine wood which ran down to the sea. There were cabins, and in one of these, the night of our arrival, was a campers' wedding; the campers escorted the young couple to their cabin with rather obvious jokes and suggestions appropriate to the occasion and razzed them afterwards with a camp orchestra composed chiefly of saucepan lids.

The camp was so popular that a good place to set the car was difficult to find; however, with friendliness, the campers selected for us a likely spot, directed us through some rather intricate backing and thus settled us in comfortably. Soon a camper strolled up with an air of friendly interest.

"Hello," he said by way of introduction, "got a bit of a knock in your engine, haven't you? Look here, if you want to get that fixed I'll give you the name of a good garage man about half a mile down the road."

To the right of us was a German couple. The fat wife had a line of clothes hanging from the trees.

"Dot kemping," she said, "dot ain't no holidays for us vomans. It's yoost vash and cook yoost like de vay ve do it at home. Yoost de same. Ven you got four kids."

The German was a watchmaker, still following the holiday tradition he had learned in the Harz Mountains but with what a difference! Here a car and a tent and folding chairs and a gramophone—

"It's a pooty place," said his wife to Jo, "but, my, ain't it dear tho'—a dollar a day. Yoost to set your tent. An' them toilets ain't like vot you should get for a dollar; an' dere's only a shower an' no laundry at all. A dollar, my!"

To our right was a family with two cars, mother, two girls, maiden aunt and cat; the two girls, one a music student the other a dancer, professional although but fifteen. Beyond them were a large trailer and a Packard car. Beyond the Germans were a new bright green car and an expensive tent. Beyond that stood a rickety old Ford and a tent repaired with sackcloth. Beyond the Ford was a big caravan built onto a Pierce Arrow chassis, carrying a shower bath inside and a radio plant. In the open space left amongst the lines of cars a group of men were playing a game of quoits with horseshoes.

The camp itself was very large and in spite of the high price (for a dollar a night was the price of a comfortable bed in a "Bide-a-wee"), it was filled, at least all the more favorable spots. But apart from the natural beauty and bathing facilities it had another appeal, its romance. No doubt the camper is romantically minded, although you might deny him this quality.

The essential features of old Romance were freedom of movement, the quest for adventure for its own sake, the gathering place and tales of notable deeds. Compare now the motor camp. In the evening the cars roll in, each man chooses a space for his pavilion, the pennants of many a field wave in the breeze—Lake Placid, Bar Harbor, Dixville Notch, John Brown's Tomb, Delaware Water Gap—Spouses and daughters set out the evening repast while the men, weary with guiding the metal covered steed, gather with easy friendliness and swap real tales of magic. "Famous, by my Halidome," becomes, "Oh, Boy, it was the goods," and "Five trusty knights lay overset in the

ditch," is translated to "Yes, sir. I drove three days and two nights without stopping except for gas and oil," or "If he hadn't drawn aside I'd a' taken the fenders off him. He was just trying to hog all of it jus' because he'd got a new Cadillac an' I got an old Ford."

We have after all only recast the old life to fit the new. When the knight had collided belligerently with another he went to the village armourer. We, in similar circumstances have the local garage. There is little essential difference. No doubt the armourer dealt in good secondhand armour with the red ticket of guarantee from the armourers' guild; and, will you but substitute the word "fender" for "gorget" and "hauberk" for "brake drums" the process of remedying the results of unlucky collisions must have been very similar in both cases.

*"Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose,"* said the French cynic.

As dusk fell on the camp the different tents were lit, each in its particular way. Some were illuminated within by electric lights from the car batteries; others used their head-lamps; some had gasoline lanterns; some of the campers found wood and lit camp fires. The groves glowed with the lights of a hundred folk who here enjoyed their summer recreation with a modern simplicity rather than with that self-exaggerating bluff which in Europe is associated with the name of America.

Here they made a specialty of a big central camp fire and an impromptu entertainment. The proprietor and his wife had in the past been connected with the stage and they knew not only the value of some kind of show but also the psychology of the amateur's own show in the right conditions. The informality of the big camp blaze was just right to encourage small though always ambitious talents—yarning, that art characteristic of the defensively objective

attitude of the middle class; songs of the old fashioned variety, in which the good will of the audience is even more on show than the gifts of the singer; two good dancers almost exemplifying Kaiserling's remark, "dancing is the only good amateur art left in America;" to which we would add story-telling. Our instruments had been noticed and we had to play too, though under the most adverse conditions, as the combined effects of the heat from the blaze and the damp of the night made it impossible to hold the strings in tune.

The mezzanine floor was a failure and we had planned another makeshift. We tied a large ground sheet to the side of the car, supported its outer corners with sketching easels and thus contrived a low shelter something like a small Arab lean-to. Amongst the surrounding luxury we attracted much curiosity, unexpressed, however, until the next morning when the owner of the trailer sauntered up and said:

"Excuse me, but I want to ask a personal question."

We gave him permission.

"Do English people always try to make themselves as uncomfortable as possible? What is the big idea in discomfort?"

We explained to him that a liberty from luxury was just as valuable to the soul as liberty from any other kind of bond. He must have been convinced, for in a quarter of an hour he was back again.

"I've got a bet on with my wife," he said. "I've bet you always shave with cold water."

"He made the *amende honorable* by inviting us to drive with them to a lighthouse on the point, where we sat on the rocks and looked at the Atlantic breaking on the sharp coast. An old and red faced seaman sat near and to him the American's wife suddenly said:

"Can we get lobsters here?"

"Just go down into the cove, lady. You'll see a wheelbarrow boat. Ask for Jim Waters; he'll fix you up."

"Wheelbarrow boat?"

"Ya. Boat made like a wheelbarrow. Wheel at one end, handles at the other."

"What made you ask him for lobsters?" asked her husband.

"Oh," she replied, "I had only one look at his face and I thought of lobsters at once."

So that night we supped on lobster with them.

Our new friend had made a fortune in Florida during the boom. He had "got from under" just in time; indeed one of his last coups would have pinched him badly but for the impatience of a Floridan buyer who raced through the technicalities of transferring real estate in his hurry to possess the land, which a fortnight after the purchase became almost unsalable.

Since that time, in spite of the fact that they had a good house in Florida, they had never gone back there, spending the years like swallows, moving north or south as the seasons changed. Their small child was an urchin of all out-o'-doors.

Jo was attracted to another couple by a nice voice, that of the old woman.

"Yes," said the old lady, "there's been reporters who wanted to write up our lives, but we kind of thought that it wasn't any of their business. You see we adopt children. We aren't rich, not really; my husband he's a bank cashier; but we haven't got any children of our own, so we just began to adopt them. We've got six right now but we're thinking whether we'll take on another half dozen. One way and another about fifty-four have passed through our house,



but we've kept the six. That's the youngest there; naughty thing, she ought to be asleep."

A little head peered up at us from inside the car which formed one wall of the shelter outside the tent.

"Yes, she's got a hammock in the car there. We sleep in the tent. Then we've got a couple of other tents, one for the girls and one for the boys. They run all ages from nineteen to this little one. The two middle girls, they sing nicely. You ought to hear them."

They called into the night and presently two ringleted girls bent under the flap, bobbed a curtsy to us and sat down. As if accustomed to this sort of thing, without protest they flicked a nondescript accompaniment on a ukulele and sang in thin childish voices a modern sentimental ballad about the Mississippi flood which concluded thus:

We can't say why this happened  
To ruin this lovely land,  
But God will tell us in His time  
And we shall understand.

A notable addition to the campers' catalogue was the peripatetic university which rolled into the Pine Woods Camp as we were on the point of leaving it. A file of old Buick cars headed by a big motor bus came cheering onto the open space in front of the camp fire. They spilled out a number of young men and women, all in breeches and green celluloid screens. Without any hesitation the sides of the motor bus were lowered to disclose rows of cooking pots which had apparently been bubbling away as the camp college trundled along the roads of New Hampshire.

Hailing from Kansas, far from the centres where the finer flavours of learning are situated, the biology section had taken to the road, bringing thus their minds to the learning rather than the learning to their minds; turning the mile-

stones into real milestones of knowledge; writing the book of wisdom with gasoline and motor oil on a page 1,500 miles long by 1,000 broad; inculcating, as was claimed in the prospectus, Health, Happiness and Character by the study of such as:

July 13th. Tour Mississippi and Alabama. Study Southern homes, plantations, natural history, etc., etc.

or

July 16th. Chattanooga to Knoxville. Bryan's death place and scenes of the Dayton trial.

July 19th. Natural history of the Huggin's Hell region and little-explored sections of the forest of North Carolina.

or

July 20th. Shenandoah Valley, Blue Ridge Mountains, Washington and Lee University and monument of Gen. Lee.

July 30th. Atlantic City. Boardwalk, Asbury Park. Ocean swims. Bath suit class work. Collecting and classifying ocean life.

Aug. 3rd. Camp New York. Study in Bronx Zoological museum. Coney Island amusement park, night.

Aug. 14th. Religious customs of the French Canadians, Quebec.

Aug. 26 or 27th. Arrive home, tired, broke, but very happy and much wiser.

Tired, possibly; broke, probably; very happy, not unlikely. But much wiser? That's the rub. "Omnibus College" they called it. *Omnibus*, by, with or from everything. Fifty days swallowing miles and knowledge indiscriminately, with one day for Mississippi and Alabama combined; studying how the Fundamentalists put Darwin in his place; giving a whole twelve hours to Huggin's Hell and the little-explored parts of North Carolina; and varying the routine of the road by bathing suit classes at Atlantic City or Coney Island. Potted, congested, mangled wisdom.

A jolly tour, yes. Leaving in the memory one thing at least, the immensity and variety of their own country, for all that Mr. Mencken says to the contrary. But wiser? Wisdom is such a risky word. Unless you admit the saying that the beginning of wisdom lies in the first conviction of ignorance. Wiser by conviction of ignorance? But that would be impossible publicity.

Of all these gay, alert youngsters, so enjoying their trip, how many were of the temperament to acquire wisdom by the inverted process of humility? Few, we fear. They were so buoyant, so bred in certainties, so dominantly extrovert.



## CHAPTER VII

### INTERSTATE HIGHWAY NO. 1

INTERSTATE HIGHWAY No. 1 is a fruitful road for the contemplative mind. Bar Harbor, a little off the Highway perhaps, but obviously belonging to its sphere, offers a query: How much better is it to seek the mammon of righteousness? The original invasion of the rich was directed at South West Harbor but was repulsed by the stern fisherfolk who would have none of these godless city people. Today their descendants gaze across the water at the fabulous mansions, hear of the soaring prices of real estate, know that those things should have been theirs, and find no keen satisfaction in the thought that their fathers are perhaps inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven instead.

Ogunquit and Gloucester display the artist striving to hold his independence against the influx of the rich who would buy and squeeze him out. From Portsmouth to Salisbury the flat lands and sandy dunes have fostered colonies of the summer middle class, housed in cheap bungalows as

thick on the ground as bee cells, a treeless, arid summering dispensing with every kind of beauty in exchange for the illusion of seaside beauty. At Provincetown, Cape Cod, the village is divided between the painters, the Portuguese and the parasitic gifte shoppes.

The State of Rhode Island suffers from the Latin invasion to such an extent that a Jewish manufacturer once complained to us of the de-Americanisation of "our" New England.

From the culinary standpoint the chicken dinners of the centre are no more; sea food is now the feature of the restaurant advertisements. Clam bakes in Maine give way to pit-baked beans; from baked beans we go on to duck sandwiches, as far as Providence, merging back again to the humble hot dog as Rhode Island is passed and Connecticut reached once more.

All along the way one may note the effects of a spirit of imitation. "Get on or get out" is a perilous motto, for the most of us are neither getters on or getters out. Left alone we are capable of equable, placid, unenvious lives; but under the stern stimulus of belligerent Plutocracy such will not suffice even for the middle masses. "Get on," is thrilled into their ears a hundred different ways a day. "Get on." But how? To "get on" is placed above all of the finer sense of conduct. Get on first; refine sensibilities afterwards, when you will have time. "Get on," is placed almost above honesty. "You can't condemn a million dollars," was a saying popularised by the failure of the Teapot Dome prosecution. Get on?

One thing can be stolen with impunity, an idea. Have you ever watched a group of fowls feeding on scraps? One fowl finds a succulent piece. The snitching of it advertises



to all the others that here is something good. At once they are in chase. The original finder has a Marathon of a dinner. Such is the position of the ingenious man in modern life. We are parlously like hens, and nowhere does the fact show so vividly as along Interstate Highway No. 1.

The immigrant, as wage slave, has had this effect on the labour market, that more honour is gained by making money than by earning it. But to make money needs one of two capacities, either initiative or the faculty of imitating somebody who has shown a money making kind of initiative. The latter is the commoner course. And so the man of initiative is at once forced into the position of the chivvied hen. In the higher circles of commerce some bar is placed by the fact of patent rights and organisation; but amongst the lower middle class, where a man can show his initiative only in small and ingenious ways—most of them merely exhibitions of superior observation of the community's needs—this chivvying of the ingenious man is not only a feature of the new conditions but almost a farce. Every small ingenious idea which might bring the inventor a nice profit for at least a term of years is at once stolen, imitated, vulgarised by a crowd of envious, would-be non-workers camped on the doorstep. Even to hit the happy strategic position for a new gas station is at once to bring about a cluster of stations, each eating away the possible profit and reducing all to an equal level of exasperated penury.

The clotting tendency of man is also exemplified along Interstate Highway No. 1. Here they mass thickly; there there is loneliness and enviable solitude; and yet apparently the one place is no more desirable than the other. Here the realtors are clamouring that you should put your summer home; there you can buy up equally pleasant seaside land at a tenth of the price.

One Tuesday afternoon we espied a notice which said, "Turn here for the Amusement Park."

But we found no more than a grove with a collection of shrouded mechanisms and booths massed round a tall though portable Ferris wheel. The amusement was asleep, a nocturnal creature. However, at the back was a big refreshment stall which had an air of superior stability, and to it we went looking for a duck sandwich, which was the popular local dainty. We asked a dark featured man who was loitering near, for details of the show, which was, so he said, only a travelling carnival, putting in time till the season for the proper fairs should come on.

"I am the proprietor," he said. "I have a dance hall over there."

He pointed to a big wooden building half hidden in the grove. Suddenly Jo amazed me by asking him:

"Now, if one proposed to stay here, take a booth and make lightning portraits, would that be feasible?"

The dark man eyed her, scratching his chin reflectively. "Is this a serious crayon proposition you are putting up to me?" he demanded.

"Certainly," replied Jo.

"Well," mused the dark man, "the point is this. Do you draw folks like *you* think they are; like they *really* are, or like *they* think they are?"

"From bitter experience I have learned to do all three kinds," said Jo.

"I guess we can make a deal," said the proprietor.

But this was only a Tuesday, and misty. Thursday, said the man, would be the first possible day of any value; but if the mist hung on no one would come till Saturday. In the face of nearly a week's waiting we decided to move. Possibly the chance might come to us in some other spot. Before we went he insisted on showing us his dance hall, a

huge place tastefully decorated with cut coloured paper.

"Well," he admitted coyly to Jo's question, "I do dance, but not here in my own hall. You understand, I am master of ceremonies. With so many, ah, ladies of middle age amongst my clients, you understand me, I have to be very tactful. Scandal rises so very quickly, and then jealousies. I have to be very cautious of giving rise to jealousy. Even so little," he snapped his finger lightly, "even so little can harm the business. Tact, that's it. Lots'a tact, I do assure you, madam."

Wiscasset, Nantucket, Gloucester— Here the old flavour hangs as thickly as at any other places in the country. At Wiscasset most of the old houses had towers from which the retired captains of yore sat with their spy glasses and wished themselves well away from land again. Nantucket we did not visit. It lies out beyond that romantic isle, Martha's Vineyard, but we tossed up in our minds whether more sight seeing was worth the price of the ferry boat and decided that it was not; consoling our consciences with a little homemade aphorism:

What we have made remembers us, even if it is itself forgotten; what we have seen forgets us, even before our foot-prints have faded from the grass where we trod.

We hunted out Gloucester on the evening of a gray day and, after some search, came onto what promised to be a dismal camping ground. Down a country lane, beyond a potato field we found an open space where, beneath a huge cherry tree, a factory-built house faced two little cabins half hidden in high bushes. The dull snorts and explosions of a gasoline pump added to the monotony of the grim dusk. The ground was empty; no other campers.

But there was a something about the camp owner which

interested us. He was young and with a manner which did not belong to the graduate from the working ranks, the status of most camp owners.

"Fix anywhere you like," he said, "and if you want any provisions or milk let me know and I'll get them for you."

During our stay there of two or three days we learned that our first impression had been correct. This was no usual camp owner, nor was his auburn haired wife an ordinary camp owner's wife. In fact the creek, which crept up from behind the woods to the edge of the field, bore his family name, and this house of matchboarding, ordered from the factory, put up while you wait, was planted on hereditary acres. The squireen was keeping camp not from financial need but merely as a lure. His wife liked the country's charms but not its solitude. So here she sat like a hospitable spider, catching the flies of travel not for their blood but for their company. Indeed we paid but twenty-five cents a night, for which not only did the husband fetch provisions for us in his own car, but on each evening they regaled us with supper. The sister who lived with them had herself published a children's book, so that there was already a family leaning towards the arts. Gloucester was naturally the place at which to catch the artists. Already, they told us, one of the cabins was occupied by a painter, a man from Chicago, who had won a gold medal at the Institute. To catch thus artists or writers was indeed an adventure; for, in spite of the sister, a family success never tastes quite the same as or has the glamour of achievement of one coming in from the outside world.

A few years back the town of Gloucester was prosperous. The fathers of the present generation could have stuck their thumbs into their waistcoat armholes, sucked at their big cigars and looked at their round bosomed cod boats with

little suspicion that in a few years the glory would have departed from Gloucester leaving its wharves to art classes and its shipyards the resort of tea rooms and painting folk. Still there is character left at Gloucester. The smell tells you that at once. The cod boats still bend out of harbour trusting to the winds, and roll home filled to the hatches with the silver spoils of the trawl; the yards still send up the stink of drying cod; the lines and nets drape the drying racks; caulkers' hammers drub on hollow hulls and in the painting docks the cradled ships loom overhead like great amphibian lizards wallowing on some primeval shore.

The wharves, the tall schooners, the sheltered harbour were almost undisturbed by the quack and clatter of the gasoline engine. Gloucester breathed an almost European serenity. In East Gloucester the red hulled vessels drawn up for painting had something of that quiet air of diligent handicraft which the visitor misses from American life. However, we turned the bows of the ships to fall plump into an art class; a dozen earnest ladies turned to gaze at us and we were at once reminded of an Albanian child's dictum: "Photographs are made through Kodaks, pictures through spectacles." Abashed, we hurried through a shed onto a wharf only to stumble into another *cheval-de-frise* of easels. Behind the wharves all the old shacks had been converted either into "Antique Shoppes," or "Olden Tyme Tea Arbours."

We stopped to sketch but as we were working more than one earnest student came up to look over our shoulders, to see whether the composition we had found might be suitable for her next study. Indeed we felt that almost every view in artistic Gloucester had long been docketed and had a reference number attached, like the photographically useful corners of Hollywood.

We had intended to stay a week or more in Gloucester but



we retreated. Quaint as the place was, it had a jaded air. As in Bruges and Étapes, sketching sites were of almost real estate value, and we had a haunting fear that at any moment a sketching class would flow down upon us and envelop us with its determined easels.

Coming back from this Waterloo into the town, we found it *en fête*. Not *en fête* garishly and joyously as of old, but mechanically and strenuously, an up to date pageant. We never learned the occasion for this show, but it had brought out all the wheeled, propelled and propulsive vehicles of the town council. Cops on motor bikes went before, with exploding exhausts like the gay gun-fire of an Arab razzia; then, a brave dash of color, the fire department, pumps, hose trucks, fire escapes; then came police wagons, Black Marias, ambulances, dwindling by slow degrees into garbage carts, concrete mixers, grading ploughs, tar boilers, stone carts, and, last, like a couple of determined sheep dogs, watching that none should lag and sufficiently powerful to enforce obedience, the road-rollers.

The other artist who occupied a cabin on the Gloucester camp ground was not intimidated by the female academies of art on the wharves. He held his own. Though small, he was of the indomitable type. So he was absent most of the day and we did not meet him at once. But we heard his wife through the bushes explaining to some guests the limitations and ambitions of her husband's art.

"Yaas," we heard a foreign voice exclaim. "My husban' he come here to paint de sheeps. He make pooty good da paintin'. Yaas. Dat one dere, fine it is. Neffer he paint it de sheeps biffor. No. In Chicago he paint exclussifly de back yard. Sometimes de flower too, but almost exclussifly de back yard. He paint de back yard so goot dey gif him a medal in de Chicago Institoot. A golt medal. Yaas.

Sure. A fine golt medal for de paintin'. So now he make him de holiday. He say, 'I go to Gloster, paint de sheeps on de sea.' No neffer he paint de sheeps biffor, but he make dem pooty fine I t'ink."

We found her a good natured soul of Polish Jew extraction; a little bewildered by her husband's gold medal and success. She was proud, in a family way, of the back yards, but still amazed that one might get a real golden medal in exchange for the picture of a mere slum garden.

"Got de golt medal for de back yard. He's pooty good at paintin' de back yard, you bet," she said over and over again to us.

In the evening the artist came back undefeated from his task of painting ships.

"Painting back yards in Chicago seems to be a paying business," we thought as we looked at his big new car.

In a few moments we were swapping reputations, travel and adventure against the glories of Chicago, and half a dozen published works of travel against the gold medal which he flaunted from his watch-chain.

But most of all he sang Chicago, the Windy City, as vigorously as any Carl Sandburg.

"Say," exclaimed our little painter of back yards, "you don't know what a city is if you haven't seen Chi. Why on Michigan Boulevard you can run eight cars abreast, and if you can't make forty per hour you get tagged for going slow. You gotta make forty or keep off— Art club for millionaires— Streets in two stories to get the traffic through— Grab a hundred acres out of the lake to make a park with; all artificial ground—"

We drew him gently away from his civic pride to himself.

"I got all that wrote out in a paper," he said and hurried off to find his clipping.

When we had read the account we could well forgive him his civic pride, could well forgive him anything in admiration.

"Ya see," he said, "it tell all about me there. I start selling newspapers. I ain't never had no education, not what you'd call education. But I fell down on the newspaper game, see, 'cause I wa'n't strong enough. Got a bad back. So Doctor he sent me into a gymnasium. Pooty soon my back get good, but I stay right there and pooty soon I get to glove fighting. I get pooty quick. Yeah. I fight quite a number of years. Well, I thinks, this don't get me nowheres so I turn to be instructor, see? But I bin having quite a lot o' spare time so I try a bit of painting. Always liked to paint I did. Not picture painting, but signs, see? Pooty soon I get pooty good painting signs, so I get a job and throw up the fighting business. Then, I think, why should I earn money for other folks, why not for myself? So, I got a bit o' money put by, from the fighting, see? An' I starts a little sign painting business on my own side, see? Well that goes pooty fine; got a fine clientele, banks and that sort, solid. So pooty soon I got men working for me. Just managing it myself. Then I get more time so I put that to this picture painting. You see, not having to make money with the picture painting, I could paint like what I wanted to. And so at last I get this gold medal, and the paper puts in just how I did it all. That's the way it come, see?"

Of Czecho-Slovak origin, imported when a child, he made a curious contrast to the camp ground proprietor. The one, America storming up, from newspaper boy to business proprietor, turning his leisure into culture, with a small son clearly destined to step ahead of his parents; the other, America declining, family godfather to a creek, tied by tradition to a dying place and a dying business, sufficiently

comfortable to dodge the plunge into the hurly-burly of competition.

And yet, curiously, the ex-pugilist's painting showed no trace of his past. Painting back yards as he did you might expect from an ex-pugilist something thunderously profane: back yards denounced in paint. But no. Using the veiling atmosphere of Chicago, he had idealised his back yards, cleverly tricked them out in snow, turned them from stern realism into planes of contrasting and sweetly coloured mist; the way the contented well-to-do see the lives of the poor. No wonder they had given him a medal.

Along Interstate Highway No. 1 the names of Old England are scattered at random in a way which seems to turn geography topsy-turvy for the foreign traveller—Bath to Yarmouth, Yarmouth to Falmouth, and then, in sequence, Portland, Scarborough, Biddeford, Wells, York, Portsmouth, Rye, Hampton, Salisbury, Ipswich, Essex, Gloucester, Manchester—the map of England peppered about. How one regrets that those old pioneers had not a deeper sense of poetry in their souls. Such as they had turned longing ears backwards to the home they had left. The lakes and the rivers, for the most part, they let be so that these retain their Indian music: Winnepesaukee, Sebago Lake, Cobas, Secontee, Androscoggin, Merrimac and Kennebec. They had no local pride in mere water; but when it came to planting their homes no despised Indian name would do them justice—turn out the men, turn out the names too. And so they tore the map of England to pieces making sedate and unconscious old cities godfathers to the wild places of the earth, which would never know their leading strings or feel the tug of the past. Portland, our sad penal promontory with its rumbling Chesil beach, is here a big city of square blocks already sprouting skyscrapers. Wells, York, Salis-



bury, where our cathedrals slumber in their green closes, here are tossed down on low sandy shores, torn, worse than Joseph's coat, into a thousand morsels of plots and lots by the realtors, and sown broadcast for miles and miles with the gregarious bungalows of the slums of Boston. But Gloucester still retains something; in England, home of a splendid cheese, in America, the breeding place of fine fishermen, celebrated in Kipling's *Captains Courageous*. An old story odour still hangs on the Gloucester air.

Fifty miles southwest of Gloucester both Jo and I had a sentimental tryst: she, to the home of *Little Women*; I to Walden Pond. She was the gainer, I the loser. The house was Louisa Alcott's; Walden Pond was not Thoreau's. For it is only the pettier things of life which will consent to play echo to a personality. Jo as a girl had almost identified herself with the Jo of *Little Women*; and here she found a number of those homely objects which had played, in her lonely childhood, a part even greater than many an object of reality. She could leap back over the obstacles of the years and forget the staid voiced guide and the rest of the led group of tourists.

Between Louisa's home and Walden Pond we stopped for a moment at the battle field of Lexington, in order to satisfy the conscience of our friends. Here paid and drilled soldiers were beaten by exasperated English colonists who, in that act, made themselves the first Americans and the first republicans also. Battle grounds, however, have little to say to us; nor has the kind of public art which is chosen to celebrate them. In consequence I heard behind me an exchange of comment from two old New England women. They had accompanied us through Miss Alcott's house and there had divined our nationality.

"See that fellow over there?" said one.



"Yes, Englishman," answered the other.

"Looks kind of grouchy like," said the first. "I s'pose he's standing there and thinking what they lost that day."

No; but at Walden Pond, a little later, I was standing and thinking what I had lost.

Walden Pond, on which canoes were gliding with Sunday flirts aboard; Walden Pond, into which the bathers were diving in their gay, bright, bathing costumes; Walden Pond, which echoed with summer cries, shouts of laughter and screams, was not a place one might make a pilgrimage to. I had no desire to cast a stone on the site where Thoreau had made Walden famous by disdaining the very thing it had become. Thoreau's Walden is not Walden but Thoreau; he has concentrated it to a thought and a memory; whereas this Walden, so religiously preserved by the very kind of people whom he repudiated, is nothing but a husk of inert material, as are those truckloads of ore which roll in at the factory gate to roll out later as a finished gleaming motor car. To write on landscape is as fugitive as to write on water.

"America," said an American woman whom we met on a train, "has only three cities: New York, New Orleans and San Francisco." The speaker, born in the South, had lived in San Francisco. Perhaps she threw in New York out of courtesy. We suspect that the aphorism was not an original thought but was predigested for her by the circumstances of her situation. A person from Chicago or from St. Louis or from Boston would not have agreed to so sweeping a statement. And yet, there could be something in the saying, to this extent, that in any of these three spots a concentration of character can be felt; quality irrespective of quantity. All three are definitely personal.

In many other American towns we have felt strongly that

they represent either a Past and a Future or, more often, a Future only. They are sites in a state of becoming; an inch or two out of the movie drama entitled "The Growth of a City" or "From the Prairie to the Pinnacle." It may be possible to take a dozen photos of Chicago which prove it is a city, but it is also possible to take a thousand and prove that it is still a formless waste of undistinguished roofs. The famous Loop has yet to be entirely rebuilt before Chicago can claim a visual dignity commensurate with her reputation; and by that time her masses may have become fused also.

In a city like Boston we felt more the battle than the growth. The past seems here to be giving way dubiously and reluctantly to the future. Boston remembers the famous Tea Party but is being forced to recognise that Americans prefer cocktails. Its narrow streets of dusky brick exhibit this hesitation; they have neither the harmony of the past nor the promise of the future.

But Boston lies on Interstate Highway No. 1, and we dashed into the city to buy plectrums for Jo's lute and strings for my guitar. So that necessity, not luxury, drove us from that quiet haven of a Swedenborgian girls' school, where we were staying with the Head Mistress, to find the last act of a drama being played out on Boston Common.

The music shop was a tremendous place, aisles, corridors, and stories lined with cases, filled with huge implements of music like the mad dreams of a maker of whisky stills—whirlpools of brass, caverns of brass, great snail shells of brass, cauldrons of brass, cymbals, demoniacal weapons with which to grunt, bang, clash and blare the hundred horse power harmony as suitable to the day of the automobile as the dainty whisper of the clavichord was to the age of the spidery cabriolet. A huge guitar of silver shone at us

malevolently, even that mellowest of sentimental instruments pepped up to this metallic age.

We came out onto Boston Common with a feeling of escape, thinking perhaps of some dim Spanish guitar shop in which the man is making a fine instrument at one side while the wife supplements his slender earnings by selling sacramental candles of prettily sculptured beeswax. At the far side of the great open green we espied a crowd of figures, a dark mass beneath the trees, and, so little were we in touch with current events, we did not suspect the cause. It was chiefly clustered at the top of a high bank sloping from the park to the road. But on climbing the steps we found the pavement also crowded and a file of police moving the automobiles on. We stayed here for a time in wonder. But Jo, looking back to the Common, said:

"Look at that group. They're planning something."

She was sharp to notice them, for, from all the other loitering, expectant people, there was little enough to differentiate them at first sight; but a closer attention did show that they were somehow unusual. There was a slight difference in their clothes, and their conversation had an undertone of tensivity; one young man's hands flickered, one girl was, on the contrary, rigid.

"They're going to do something," said Jo. "I wonder what is the matter?"

They merged again into the crowds, but reappeared on the other side of the road promenading along the pavement below the big white building opposite, displaying broad white cardboards on which were printed messages such as the following:

"GOVERNOR FULLER. We demand justice and not mercy. Will you allow two innocent men to die?"

"TRY IT ON. Send Sacco and Vanzetti to the chair and

you are making the American people commit murder."

We realised that we were seeing the last phase of that American tragedy which had stirred the whole Liberal world as deeply as had the famous Dreyfus case. At the same time we realised that the so obviously Municipal Building in the background, wearing its Corinthian columns like a



PROTESTS IN BOSTON

shirt front and its cupola like a respectable derby hat, sheltered the Governor of the State. There he was, listening to the last pleas of the defenders of those wretched men who for seven years had struggled to escape from a sentence of death which, whether rightly or wrongly found, was clouded enough by doubt of prejudice and suspicion of perjury to justify in any fair minded person's opinion a repugnance to any final and irrevocable decision. The long drama was only a few hours from its close.



The crowd in the park was not troubled either by doubts or pity. It was content enough to commit murder, if murder it was, and be done with the business.

"Aw, Hell," ejaculated a fat business man, "makin' all this fuss about a coupla Wop anarchists. What's the sense? Burn 'em and forget it. If it was me I'd give those fool protesters over there a coupla years apiece. Teach 'em not to stir up dirt."

"Lot of dam' sob stuff," responded another. "An' what the Hell it's got to do with them blasted Frogs an' British over in Europe beats me. Ain't this our business?"

The irritation over the European messages was particularly acute, but what astonished the crowd was that this insignificant incident should arouse such a wave of world-wide protest.

"It's these Socialists and Bolshevicks," said one of the men. "I'd give them fellows over there Bolshevism. Kick 'em all out of the country and send 'em to Russia; see how they'd like it then."

Meanwhile the little band of idealists had been marching to and fro under the windows of the building, parading their pleading or provocative placards. The police in line watched them pass with bored eyes. They were tired of arresting them. The burly sergeant warned them that their presence amounted to an obstruction and in five minutes' time gathered them into the embrace of a squad of police, lined them up for the press photographers, who were squatting on the parapet of the railings, and then marched them off to the station where friends were already in waiting to bail them out. Later we heard that some of the more persistent ones were being side tracked in another way. The charge of obstruction could not keep them in jail, if anybody would stand sponsor; and bailed out, they at once returned to the march. Therefore, the police invented the ingenious idea of



calling into question the mental condition of the more persistent, under which charge they could be taken to the alienist's ward for examination, the doctor having been previously warned to stay away. Thus some were held in quarantine till the affair was over.

The journalists had a position of advantage and, as I was carrying a camera, we stepped across and joined them as though we had the right. The photographers sat lethargically. There was no profit in the business for them. Unless a struggle took place this was mere routine work, covering the job just on the chance that some variation of news value might develop. One arrival swung his camera bag violently from his shoulder.

"God," he exclaimed, "and they call this a free country. Oh, Hell!"

A new line of protesters had gathered and was forming up. Once more they shook their placards at the windows of the unresponsive building.

"See that fellow there, walking second," said a journalist to Jo. "Looks kind of sentimental and dopy like. That's the author, Dos Passos. He's been arrested a dozen times or more."

We had met Mr. Dos Passos in New York but he could not see us now; we were only a part of that exterior world against which he was so selflessly battling, that obtuse mass which did not want to be convinced of injustice even if it were committing it—ruthless against a Sacco; sentimental over a Ruth Snyder!

Standing in the group of photographers we took several photos of those who had been arrested, lined up by the obliging police. But the presence of Jo began to draw attention. A policeman questioned her right to be there. She claimed companionship with me, which brought my status into question. We do not know if the police were on their best be-

haviour that day. Had we been caught in a similar predicament by French or Fascist police we would have been ejected with little ceremony and perhaps much rudeness; but, in spite of the hard reputation enjoyed by the American police, nobody could have been gentler in squeezing us out. At first the man argued with Jo; then he tried pleading. Jo persisted that she would get lost in the crowd opposite if she had to go over alone. Then he brought the Inspector who again tried tact. At last the Inspector said with an air of finality:

"Well, madam, I cannot say what will happen if you are not gone within three minutes. But, oh! I do wish you would go of your own free will."

We understood that our leash was stretched to its full and we went, but as we were crossing the road the Inspector called out.

"Don't worry. We'll line up the next batch for you so's you can get another picture."

Boston was full of sinister rumours as soon as the fact was learned that all hope of a reprieve was futile and that at midnight these two were to finish their seven years of waiting. Anarchist riots were expected in the town, an anarchist aeroplane was to fly over the prison district dropping bombs. We drove into the town to test the temper of the inhabitants. Boston was as if dead. Nobody moved through the streets; a sinister silence ruled. For a mile around the prison police barriers had been erected, and detours sheered away motorists from that poignant center of grisly interest. Searchlights traversed the stars restlessly, machine guns had been mounted on some of the higher buildings, so they said.

Quietly and with some dignity Sacco and Vanzetti took their seats in the fatal chair and were blazed off beyond any

possible chance of subsequent readjustment or reparation.

Innocent or guilty, the immediate revision of the criminal procedure of the State of Massachusetts is a comment which cannot help but strengthen a belief that here was a case where justice should have been at least tempered with humanity and caution. But the business interests could not weaken, they must prove Socialism criminal at any cost.

Even in New England the European visitor may be struck by the positiveness of the American scene. The American town is very definitely town; the villages are definitely village; that blend of town and country, the country town, seems almost entirely absent, except in a summer centre like Lake Placid. Centralised business and cheap transport have strangled the village industry. But, beyond town and village, the country has also an intense quality, that of loneliness. Once out from the inhabited section, the traveller may go for miles without seeing a house or a sign post. One motorist told me that he always carried a compass to be sure that he was going in the right general direction. But, inevitably, as soon as one leaves the high road with its main stream of traffic, every mile along adds to a fear that one may be on the wrong road. Dusk and a strong uncertainty that any camp ground lies beyond can add much to the motorist's perplexity.

In such a state of mind we found ourselves driving across Cape Cod on the evening after leaving Boston. There had been doubts in the mind of our last informant where we might find a camp, but he was sure that not one existed along the road we were then following. He had turned us along this track with instructions to ask when we got along a bit. But all that our headlights showed us was mile on mile of hedge and thin copse. However, at last we came to a sharp cross road, and from the intense loneliness we came,

by abrupt contrast, into a colony of dance halls and fancy restaurants, standing, for the most part still unlit, against a blue background of night. One restaurant showed a discreet glimmer, and there we enquired; but it was an exotic little place, the smart waiting maid glanced superciliously at our dirty car and said she was sure *she* couldn't tell us where a camp ground might be found. So we chanced the left turn, as that was our general direction, and came at last to a refreshment booth where we ate duck sandwiches and enquired again. Here we got directions.

In twenty minutes we were feeling our way into a pine wood where a number of tents were already set. To add to our inconveniences a thin drizzle was thickening as we hurriedly set up our new purchase, a secondhand tent, driven to such a shelter by the continued inclemency of the weather. From the neighbouring tents the kindly campers walked over to offer any kind of help which we might need.

But we had nothing to do other than go to bed, rolling ourselves in our quilts on the tarpaulin floor where we lay contentedly listening to the increasing weight of the rain which poured on our shelter. The next morning dawned still wet, and for a while we debated whether we should wait for a clearer moment. But Jo insisted that the rain was getting worse rather than lighter. So, huddled in oil skins, we began to pack, in spite of well meant comments on the part of some of the other campers. As we took down the tent the rain increased and we rolled it up in an almost torrential downpour, both it and ourselves soaked through and through. But we were bound for the house of artist friends farther up the Cape.

As I was about to put my foot on the starter a distant noise made me pause to listen. It was a faint rushing sound which became momentarily louder. A breath of wind took the rain aback for a minute, and then, with a whoop, a hurri-



cane swept on us through the trees. In a second the tranquil dripping scene was turned into one of the wildest confusion. Owing to the rain, many of the campers were still abed; the rain had drawn the ropes tight and in most cases had loosened pegs thrust lightly into the pine wood soil. The wind rushed under those tented canvases and literally whipped them over their astonished owners' heads, exposing



CAMP GROUND IN A HURRICANE

people and belongings to the slashing rain. Screams and yells of dismay mingled with the howling of the wind through the pine branches. Some of the tents held at a corner or two; men and girls in varying stages of undress or pyjamas were scurrying here and there frantically trying to capture wildly blowing corners or, having captured them, trying to get them pegged down securely against the assaults of the tempest. The force of the wind was such that it blew the supports of an umbrella tent clear through its eyeholes so that the tent collapsed onto the inhabitants and in a jiffy was



converted from a stately pavilion into fighting lumps of sodden canvas from which exploded squeals, ejaculations and blasphemy.

We laughed so much that for a time we were unable to run to the rescue. At last a kind of dismal order was restored, in that all the tents had been flattened to the ground, except one which still withstood the blasts. The campers, thoroughly soaked but showing that humour in adversity which is one of the happiest heritages of the Anglo-Saxon race, had taken refuge in the camp recreation room before we resumed our road.

The drive was a strange experience. Sometimes we were running under shelter only discommoded by the sheets of water which almost blotted out sight of the road. But in other spots we were exposed to the full rage of the wind which assaulted us with such violence that the car was blown skidding and seemed at times in danger of being forced clear across the slippery road. A branch torn from a tree came sailing down to hit the road only a few yards before us, but did not quite block the way; and a whole tree fell behind us, just after we had passed. Sometimes the air was so full of sprays and leaves that the radiator, hood and windshield were plastered with greenery and the wiper was clogged. Meanwhile, the rain was forced through every crevice of the old shaken body so that we sat in a continual showerbath and were as wet as though in the open.

Provincetown—Even more thickly sown with artists than Gloucester. As much propaganda as protest. The Paris Bohemian lives a *blague*, he flicks the Bourgeois under the nose with a feather and the Bourgeois retorts with a shrug. The thing has never been serious—“*Ah, là là . . . la jeunesse.*” In England we affect a shortsightedness. The arrogance of a Wilde is needed to stimulate a vicious retort. But

here the relations between the Bohemian and the public are always rather tense. Comstockery lurks vigilant. The Bohemian is looking for the Public's behind to give it a kick and the Public is looking for the Bohemian's nose to give it a punch. In this Bohemia one feels a defiance, an over-emphasis to anticipate the bigoted criticism; so that it is strident rather than easygoing and, like a child disobeying its parents, will go to sheer excess merely to insist on its individuality.

From Provincetown we turned into the Berkshire Foothills because that was our best way to the Ohio. Not good as geography perhaps, but good for an introduction. Mr. O——, whom we sought, was a retired actor, the friend of a friend. He had spent a season as an actor on an Ohio Show Boat, and that was the adventure which we were aiming at.

Here in a lovely hillside setting, facing the sinking sun as it set over Mount Tom, Mr. O—— had realised his ambition of retiring from the stage and of becoming a farmer. We suppose that the artificiality of the stage must turn many an actor to the idea of a farm and getting as near to nature as possible. But Mr. O—— soon found that a farmer's life has limitations. As a college professor once said to us: "A genuine American takes no pride in dung." All around him Mr. O—— found imported Czechs, Slavonians, Germans, still in the primitive European state of loving good dung, seeing it not as past excrement but as future provender, the hopeful half of the eternal circle. Nor did the actor-farmer quite anticipate the intensity of the New England winter, the raw freezing murk of a January morning or the mediæval fetters which a yardful of stock can rivet to the farmer's ankles. In two years Mr. O—— and his wife had realised

that a farmer like a sailor (much more so than an artist), should be born and only with difficulty can be made.

"However, in New England it is easier to saddle yourself with a farm than to be rid of it. Luckily the new motor car public was beginning to alter conditions in this countryside, within such easy reach of New York. So the O——'s invented, or borrowed, the idea of transforming their extensive farm buildings into summer bedrooms and making here a guest-farm for artistic or semi-artistic folk.

The place called for a certain style; that was important; the selling value of Art. Already it was physically distinguished. Its big barns, its tall tower-like silo, its old farmhouse of cream wood, slashed by the vermilion chimney-shaft, stood about a wide lawn on which grew massive trees. The biggest barn was turned into a theatre; and all the others, tobacco barn, turkey houses, fowl houses, even the silo, pierced with windows, were slashed into bedrooms or studios; the wagon-shed became a garage. Bertram Hartman the artist decorated the walls with weird dancing figures; old Sicilian weathercocks signalled a dozen different draughts of wind simultaneously and, set against the walls of the tobacco barn, a pagan figure christened "St. Volstead" brooded, crimson nosed, over the destinies of the venture. For their ingenuity Mr. and Mrs. O—— had found an occupation which in return for a summer's hard work would allow them an almost total freedom during the winter to wander over America or Europe at their will. Ingenuity does offer such rewards here, providing it is of a nature which is just out of the reach of the everyday imitator.

The farm house itself was not the most interesting feature of the place, but the barn-built theatre. Just as we reached the farm Mr. O—— had finished constructing for his stage

a modern dome of concrete and a complete lighting installation. His actors were gathered from the small town or farmer families round about and, having a mixture of many exotic and romantic bloods from which to choose, he had no difficulty in finding lads and girls with ability and fire. He and his wife had trained them to a pitch of excellence, considering. He did not choose to play down to country audiences but gave plays of the younger men, usually on modernistic themes. He thus tested the receptivity of the country folk to modern drama and confessed himself surprised. At first the unexpected qualities of the plays, their unusual subjects, from the farmer's point of view, and lack of that melodrama to which they were accustomed, gave the people something of a shock. But they came back again, savouring this new kind of drama until it has become so popular that now when the everyday melodramists play in the little town adjacent they are often asked: "Why don't you give us something from real life like what Mr. O—— does up at the Barn there?"

As an isolated phenomenon, this ready acceptance of modernism in the theatre by the uneducated farming classes would be interesting; but it is allied to a much wider movement in the United States. Kaiserling said that dancing was the only good amateur art left, but he surely overlooked the new American cult of the small theatre. The Little Theatre Movement is of enormous importance and is growing rapidly. There are already, we have been told, more than eight thousand Little Theatre Societies in the States, and some of them are giving countenance to works which the legitimate stage would not venture to undertake. In addition to the amateur side of the art, companies of players are touring in cars or buses, carrying their scenery with them and often the stage as well. One of these we had met in a New England village

preparing to give a representation of "The Rivals" by Sheridan in the grounds of a country hotel. The Carolina Folk Players, outcome of the dramatic classes of the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill, not only produce and tour their own plays but write them. A school of dramatic folk art, developed under the instruction of Professor Koch, has at least produced the genius of Paul Greene who won the Pulitzer prize in 1927 with his play, "In Abraham's Bosom."

This rapid spread of the Theatre, even in an amateur guise, is not really astonishing. It is related to another phenomenon in American psychology. The American seems to be, more than any other people of the present time, highly susceptible to the spoken word. Oratory is valued from the highest to the lowest. We had seldom been called to speak in public before we came to the States; here we have difficulty in escaping. Free banquets, even large sums of money have been pressed on us if we would only talk. But nowadays oratory has something of a stale air; even lectures, unless by notorieties, are beginning to flag. However, a ruling passion must persist even though certain aspects may go out of fashion. Driven from the platform, the National desire for expression in speech has bloomed out into the amateur theatre, and, under the leadership of O'Neill, shows signs of producing a school of younger dramatists to fit its needs.





## CHAPTER VIII

### ALLEGHENY FOOTHILLS

AMERICA is justifiably proud of possessing 20,000,000 out of the world's 23,000,000 automobiles; but, even after touring New England's camp grounds, even with the long car processions on the highroads, even after wandering for half an hour in the search for one niche amongst the ranks of parked cars in a small township, you can hardly realise the truth of American motor statistics until you have been trapped in one of the main roads leading from a big city on a day of National holiday.

From the Guest-Farm we had looked in at Easyport to find it changed, with all the habitual inhabitants on vacation. From there we had struck away towards the Hudson and Bear Mountain Bridge. Having travelled many miles of semi-countrified road we were coming down to the shores of

the river near Ossining. We could hear the main road long before we reached it. The sound was not unlike that of the passage of a gigantic herd of cattle, a prolonged rustle, coming from infinity on the one hand, passing to infinity on the other, punctuated by the lowing of Klaxons and the bleating of horns. Sliding down a short hill we found ourselves blocked by the procession. The main road was almost solid with cars of every description, a viscous fluid projected at thirty miles an hour, though now and again congealed by some cross currents, a river of mechanisms pouring out of the city floodgates opened on the countryside.

There was no other road so we wedged ourselves in and travelled with the throng. It was a curious sensation; a restatement, in mechanical terms, of the old quarrel between free-will and predestination; clearly from one angle every driver had free will; clearly from another angle he had not. Hemmed in by hurtling projectiles, in a crowded rush, where the slightest miscalculation or momentary failure would sow havoc, the mass roared self-confidently forward, gaily carrying Death on holiday.

Bear Mountain Bridge lies a good fifty miles from the Woolworth Tower but, thus far, without sensible diminution the headlong cortège persisted. Over the bridge a steady stream of cars poured to the Palisades Park where most stopped, joining the already condensing throng, content to be as far as this, feeling no urge to be for once dissociated from the crowd. The day was still early but already the park seemed as full as convenient; though, for hours yet, in they would come, till the country would be more congested than New York itself.

Again it was extraordinary how rapidly we passed beyond all that congestion. A few zig-zags in the climbing road brought us into an almost complete solitude. We had been warned, "Do not stop to give rides to wayfarers through this

country." The kind motorist has often paid dearly for his complaisance and, beaten over the head by the object of his friendliness, has been tossed into the ditch to die. This district has a peculiarly bad reputation, for through it the bootlegging gangs run much of their contraband from Canada, and the modern form of bandit, called the hijacker, also lurks here to plunder the bootlegger. General lawlessness had risen to such a pitch that night driving in this district was definitely dangerous. But no suspicious characters signalled to us to stop. Perhaps even the motor bandit has discrimination, and the appearance of the old "Hearse" could have tempted nobody except a man in the most desperate of straits.

Coming into the valley of the Delaware we found it also a playground of New York, clamorous with advertisements of natural wonders, waterfalls, cold air caves, mountain clefts; all objects for that strange gluttony of the eyesight which is a vice of the romantic age. At the camp ground by the Indian Ladder Falls the holiday makers baked Indian corn in an old brick oven.

At the Delaware Water Gap we had a collision with a motorcyclist—damage to him, fifty dollars' worth.

Coincidence in real life is too astonishing to be useful as fiction; in real life the unlikely is too often simple truth. We were on the way to a little town that we thought was in Delaware State but found to be ten miles from Delaware Water Gap; thus, pure chance saved us a journey of some two hundred and fifty miles. So, instead of pursuing our way to Philadelphia and thence down the Delaware peninsula, we turned onto the William Penn Highway for Pittsburgh and the Ohio.

A wry fate has indeed overtaken some of the place names of America, today they stand so far apart from the inten-

tions of the founders. However, if there is any aptness in the nickname New Jerusalem for New York then this Bethlehem, in Pennsylvania, is a Bethlehem such as it merits. Telegraph and telephone wires gather so thick by the road that they rank three deep on either side and here the coal smoke, which lays its grimy touch over all the central Eastern States, first dispossesses the sky of its white clouds. This is the new Bethlehem, shrine of steel, where perhaps the girders for building the modern spires of commerce are manufactured.

And yet, with that strange blending of the ideal and the material which characterizes the new world, in this shrine of steel, in this smoke palled, wire bound city, mingling with the roar of the tuyères and the crackle of the rolling mills, rise the sweet strains of Johann Sebastian Bach. And so devout are the Bethlehemites to the composer's memory that one might say in truth that if the spirit Bach broods anywhere on this earth then surely it broods here, over this Bethlehem with its splendid choir. So that both the devils and the angels possess the place.

But the devils have certainly won the looks of it.

That great rent in the hills, the Delaware Water Gap, had been as it were a gateway, dividing America for recreation from America for use. Behind us was historical America; before us was the America of the future, America of coal and iron, of wheat and corn. From the Delaware Water Gap onwards we became aware of a definite change in the character of the roadside. Catering for the tourist almost disappeared. No more camp ground advertisements; no more "Ye Olde Tyme Inns" with dollar chicken dinners; few refreshment booths selling the homely frankfurter under seductive nicknames—Hot Dogs, Toasted Barkers, Heated Hounds. These clustered where America was in a mood to



loiter for them. From here onward we would meet very few of the luxury kind of tourist, except those either going to or returning from a holiday in the New England States.

So that when we spied in the far side of Allentown a gasoline station with a green plot behind, on which a tent was already set, we pulled up, relieved to be out of a predicament which had been bothering us. A small refreshment stand was alongside and, on the road, was a tall brick erection where, shielded by a big sheet of fireproof glass, a leg of pork was turning slowly on a spit before an open fire. "Bar-B-Q" was written in large letters overhead.

We were already touching the South, for here was the southern equivalent of the hot dog. Yes, here was the culinary Mason and Dixon's Line. North of us lay the homely hot dog, succulent vehicle for mustard, wrapped in its long roll as in a sleeping sack; from this place on was the spit-grilled pork spread with sweet pickles and put to bed decently between sheets of bread. In truth we learned to regret the hot dog. Of recent and whirlwind growth, almost contemporary with the gasoline station, with a name the height of unappetising crudeness, yet it has a simple charm; it is one of those dishes so cunningly compounded that it never palls. Between it and the Barbecue there is as much difference as between the Northern and the Southern women-folk, the Northern perhaps somewhat less exciting, a little more bready, less exotic, but on longer acquaintance more persistently satisfying to the palate.

However, at the moment, a change of diet pleased us, not knowing that we would get little else from here right on to Savannah. The secondhand tent needed but ten minutes to set up, and we were ready to make acquaintances.

The tent which had drawn us into this place was a well weathered affair, stained but serviceable. The car, like many another camper's car, possessed tall cupboards built



on either side of the running board, and a big trunk behind; so that the old Dodge looked like a travelling wardrobe. Over a gasoline stove the wife was boiling clothes in a bucket, while the man was occupied in some sort of repair work. He caught my eye and saluted us with his hammer.

"Can I be of any assistance," I said in the conventional camper's password.

"Got my hood blown off," said he, gesticulating with the implement, "coming along from Harrisburg. Pretty old it was but, Lord, when that gust got under it I didn't know just what had happened. Ripped it off like tearing paper. Trying to fix another myself. Got this stuff at the ten cent store, see."

The positive element in the National character is quite noticeable in the camps. The types divide strongly between the communicative and the silent, the mixer or the clam; the first, developed to its highest point in the travelling salesman, the latter springing from the farmer, who in his heart despises garrulity. This one seemed of the former class so I ventured the question:

"Where do you come from?"

For a moment I thought that I had mistaken my man. From his glance I believed that I had asked a clam a question designed for a mixer. But he broke into a laugh.

"Born in Minnesota; married in New Jersey; car licensed in Alabama, and keep my house under my hat."

With a lazy grace the wife came across from the wash bucket. She looked at our car and the load inside.

"You going across?" she asked, meaning to California.

"No, just driving round painting."

"Houses?"

"No, pictures."

They were a couple difficult to place. Their clothes were careless, the man in overalls, the woman in a cotton dress;

he used his hammer like a handy man, the kind of man who helps himself; she had an air of capable undomesticity, something gypsyish, although clearly she was not a Gypsy; nothing oriental about her, no subserviency, no money consciousness.

"No kids?" she queried Jo. "That's it. Can't go loose if you've a lot of kids about. We ain't got none neither."

"Which way are you going?" asked Jo.

"North," said the woman. "Been South for the winter, getting pretty hot down there soon. We'll put in a spell somewheres till it gets cooler again."

"But where's your home?" said Jo.

"Home," answered the woman. "That's our home."

She pointed at the tent.

"Five years," she said. "That's all the home I ever wanted."

"And you like it?" asked Jo.

"Like it?" she retorted, "I should say I do like it. What do you think? No housekeeping, no responsibilities, no dusting, no ironing. Eh? Why, times when we're driving through some place I see all them women messing about with houses, just slaving to be respectable, always thinking of something they haven't got and want and can't buy because the last thing they got ain't paid for yet, and I go on. Ain't nothing to tie me down. No rent to pay, no house to clean. Nowhere where I got to be. No neighbors to criticize. Do I like it? I should say I do. Sure."

The man had pulled out a large jack knife and a piece of chalk.

"I gotta make a hole in this here back. P'lice regulations. But I want to make it as small as I can."

We stood in conclave and gave our estimates. The woman turned to her washing bucket once more.

"Tomorrow, I'll be looking round for a bit of work,"

said the man. "It ain't so easy as it used to be. Times are pretty slack now."

"What's your proper job?"

"Plasterer. Oh, I'll be all right. I'll find something sure. Keep at it maybe two, three weeks, and then we'll move on. Get some sea bathing maybe up in Maine, when it gets real warm. Gee! You couldn't get either me or my wife there to fix in one place. Do you know what makes me laugh? Why these real estate advertisements. See them. 'Fix your home here,' or, 'Every woman wants to own her home.' You ask her!"

Five minutes later he was giving me advice about a special kind of piston ring for old cars.

Later we met more of his kind, the new vagrants; though these belonged to the higher branch of the cult. For, among the gasoline tramps, there are two divisions. The first is made up of those who have a trade but dodge the ties and the limitations of a fixed abode, living not badly on the product of some four months' work a year, the freest class of men in these United States, subject to no employers, slaves to no environment. The prototype of the second class is merely the old-fashioned tramp taken to wheels, his car a piece of junk which still travels, his supplies begged or stolen, his gasoline got by many a clever ruse—pretending to have run out of fuel at some lonely spot, trusting to the very ready generosity of the average American driver, or by jamming himself in at some narrow awkward place, thus forcing the man who would pass to help him out first. The motor car tramp is not one of the least curious of the phenomena brought into being by the novel conditions of American life.

Today was Independence Day. We could not have celebrated with a more suitable couple, for if these had not found independence, who could be called independent? Yet we

have learned that this new kind of independence fostered by the cheap car is not favoured in this land of the free. For freedom, however admirable, is comparative. The man who settles down and pays his taxes repudiates him who, being content with little except freedom, dodges civic responsibilities. The old fable of the ant and the grasshopper; nothing changed since La Fontaine except that the ant has waited now so long for that retributive winter to come that he is being tempted to take retribution into his own hands and zip the grasshopper with some political brick or other.

Independence was celebrated all night long by the passage of holiday cars speeding back to their industrial bonds. The barbecue oven did a fine trade, for the stream of cars did not thin off till nearly four in the morning. There was, in addition, a corner just beyond; so the combination of the stopping, the starting, and the blaring of horns prevented us from sleeping. One tremendous clattering called us out. But it was only an old Ford car filled to repletion and running on the iron rim; the workmen owners were evidently too broke to pay for the necessary tire repairs. They clattered along the road with a curiously three legged look, a bumping limp.

In consequence we slept late. When we had roused ourselves we expected to gain more knowledge of our vagrants, but were astonished to find them gone. They had intended to stay, but some information, learned after we had turned in, must have made them alter their plans. At any rate they were free souls.

At one corner of the ground was the rubbish pile evidently purged at intervals by fire. On this ash heap an old man was drawing something from the refuse. He began to put together a folding table. With big, stiffened hands, he

pressed on it and rocked it to and fro, and, as it successfully passed the test, his smile grew wide with pleasure.

"Himme' Herr Gott," he exclaimed. "Bot t'at's goot yet. Ain't it yoost? Chook away it like nothings."

"Who?" I asked.

"Dose kempers," he answered, dismembering the table again with the pride of new possession. "Herrje, how dey chooks. I dell you I furnish altogether my room vit de ting dey chooks; chair, yas, an' table, now, and bed. One feller he come; it rain and it rain. Say, he git mad, he chook away de lot, chook de tent, chook de bed, chook de stofe. 'Gott dam',' he say mad like hell, 'I no kemp no more.' I say to him, 'Mister, why you gonna chook all dat stoof? Why ain't you sell?' He say, 'Hell, I no bodder sellin' dat stoof. I puts fire to 'em but dey's vet yet.' I sell dat tent for ten dollar. He yoost like chook ten dollar. Dat's de vay vit dese Americans peoples. Dey yoost vaste de stoof. Chooks it. I tink sometime dey likes it dat vay, to chook."

One of the boys behind the barbecue counter came out.

"Hey, Hans there," he cried. "You scavenging as usual?"

"Ya," cried the old German. "Dey chooks me a table. S'goot."

"Better git back an' finish that cleaning," shouted the boy.

"Ya, Jack," cried the old man. "I go all right. I yoost git dat table."

He rolled the bundle under his arm and scuttered away muttering:

"I neffer see de vay dem kempers chook; no I neffer see—"

How long had he been here? That peasant instinct of saving waste had been tattooed into his soul. Gainer though he might be personally, we could feel that the memory of



the impatient camper throwing away all his kit in a huff had really hurt him; he hated to see humanity so improvident.

The hand of Germany was strongly stamped on this region, whether from the old Pennsylvania Dutch days or whether from more modern importation. That strange god-child of Bethlehem yesterday was founded by the pious Moravians, and here, where the suffix "burgh" would seem



DECORATED BARN, PENNSYLVANIA

most appropriate, it is rare, so that the country is seamed with odd hybrids such as Trexlertown, Kutzville, Breiningsville, Strausstown and so on. The country barns were massive and painted in elaborate, geometrical patterns of many colours which

must have made this part of the country very striking when it was universal. In many a farm the remains of white wooden windmill towers were still standing, and the thick-set, genial farmer folk spoke either an English very difficult for English people to understand or a German dialect equally difficult for a German, proving the resisting qualities of a homely culture and how far America is from being standardised, even within a hundred miles of Baltimore or Philadelphia.

The big farms and the solid magnificence of the byres and

barns, the rich rolling land, with its wooded knolls mounting in steady recessions into the Allegheny foothills, are just such places as those old godly, world-wise Moravians would choose. Even the landscape has a touch of rich German satisfaction, compared with the harsher New England soil; much as the German Puritanism compared with the English. Indeed doesn't Calvinism or Lutheranism sit more easily on the German because of his plumper spirit?

At the roadside here and there were booths selling succulent peaches garnered from the orchards, with guarantees against the Japanese beetle, a foreign insect pest like many another which, imported into America and finding here new ground free from the mitigating enemies and parasites of their land of origin, have spread disastrously. Twice we passed cordons of agricultural police, one of which robbed us of a splendid basket of fruit on which we had already feasted in fancy.

We were bound for Pottsville in the Schuylkill country. Here the Chambers of Commerce did not show as much bustling energy as in New England. Few of the towns bothered to welcome the coming stranger or speed the parting motorist. On the other hand they were sometimes historically informative about the origin of the town's place name. Thus Pottsville gravely informed us by means of a big board that it had been founded by William Potts. We had a historical map of Pennsylvania, given to us by a friendly camper. On it we referred to Pottsville, hoping to find it after all more remarkable than its name; and, indeed, here the Molly Maguires were tried for murder in 1876. We drove on to Minersville, where I found that a tire had leaked flat and began to change it against the curb in the main street while Jo purchased food.

We were looking for a man to whom we carried a letter of introduction. A well known artist had said that if we

passed through this territory we must, without fail, look up his old Friend Bill B——, which we were now doing. Old Friend Bill was especially interested in the immigrant question, the transformation of the raw Czech or Bohemian into the American citizen. The last time that the artist had met Friend Bill had been while skidding about in cars on dirt roads after a Maryland storm. Almost had a collision. He would drop a line to old Friend Bill telling him to look out for us. From his general description, we got the idea of a genial, broad shouldered, lusty man, marooned up in a rough district without suitable companionship, welcoming any strange intrusion as a change from the monotony of a superintendent's life. The grocery man who accompanied Jo out onto the pavement to watch me changing the tire did not alter this impression. I first asked for the direction of Mr. B—— "Oh, you mean Bill," said the grocery man. Then he asked,

"Come from C'nneticut?"

"From Old England really," I answered.

"I guess you can get away with it," he said, pointing to my operations, "but if the traffic cop caught one of us trying to change a tire on Main Street we'd get ticketed."

There was no coin-box telephone in Minersville, which about gauges the size of the place, but by the courtesy of the local drapery shop we were able to telephone to old Friend Bill and at the sound of his voice I had my first qualm of wonder. However, the drapery man called him Bill also, a further tribute to his mixing quality, so we pushed on undismayed.

The Birth Control Society founds one of its claims to utility on the rapidly approaching overpopulation of the United States but the landscape would at present seem to deny the imminence of that danger. There are parts of Vermont, and New England in general, where one can feel

lonely; but here it almost hit us like a blow in the face. Even on the main roads there are wildernesses enough, mile on mile without a house; but on these side roads, where the traffic is in proportion to the population, where you travel earthy by-roads, innocent of any sign board, where the next house may be ten miles away and the next car three hours, the sense of emptiness becomes staggering. You come to realise that, including all the densely populated town areas, the population of the United States is only ninety persons per productive square mile, while in France it is over two hundred. Subtract the cities, and we would like to know the density of the remainder.

Searching thus for old Friend Bill we left the main road and for mile on mile travelled between uncommunicative woods of scrub. Roads branched off, but no sign indicated which was main and which was by. At last we reached a fork in the ways. Here we were at a complete loss, but ended by choosing that which showed the most traffic. Local road instruction always ignores divisions; "Why, that ain't a fork, that there is only a byway; goes to Sam Hinkle's place it does. Anybody can see which road is straight on." The one we had chosen clung always to the woods, not a chance of a view over the country. The day had been cloudy but now was ready to darken into dusk.

At last we came to an open space, a cross-road where children were at play with baseball and bat, but shouting to one another in a strange tongue. The sport had preceded the language. But they managed to understand enough of our lingo to direct us. We were on the right road after all.

Here we passed through a little lost village, two stores and blocks of cottages built in progressive stages of standardisation; older women on the doorsteps with much of the European left in them, a tendency to bunchiness and blousiness, clothes tape-tied round the waist; girls in the silken



finery of the cheap chain store, already denationalized in appearance but not, as we were to learn later, in habits; and here and there one or two clumps of miners, their clothes polished with damp, grease, coal and sweat, faces done in black and white, as though some heavy handed, Russian artist had been drawing their portraits on their own skins, peaked leather caps and Davy-lanterns swinging, dim flickers in the daylight. The miners were grotesques of men, inconceivably remote from the daintily dressed girls who were destined to be the bed-fellows for them or their likes.

Then, woods once more and a little chapel, a wire gate suddenly cutting the wood off, a railway siding, a few houses and a mine head standing over a steep slope, all very unexpected in that loneliness. "Yes," we thought, "we can understand how Old Friend Bill longs for company."

But beyond the mine head we came on a park-like entrance leading to a drive, box hedges, flower beds and tennis courts where girls and men in flannels were playing. On two sides were prim looking houses rather like English vicarages covered with Virginia creeper. We remembered our friend's description: "Old Bill B——, stuck away there, doing him a favour, give him a bit of a change. Stay with him a week or so."

The American mining character has a certain romantic outline, drawn perhaps from fiction, but credible nevertheless. But if we had known more we would hardly have ventured, thus blatantly dressed like tramps, into the presence of a man servant, condescending—

"Mister B——? I believe he may be at home. What name please?"

Mister B—— was the right name; there was little of Old Bill in the ascetic gentleman who bowed so courteously to



us, with his air of a scholarly recluse and his long lawyer's hands. The dignified manservant brought tea in eggshell china. We felt in an odd way that we had been defrauded. Not indeed that Mr. B——'s conversation lacked interest of an unusual kind, for he told us many interesting facts about the half absorbed immigrant life which constitutes most of such lonely mining villages. But we had been defrauded of the Old Bill, defrauded of that loneliness which we had come to alleviate, if only in passing, defrauded of a type, defrauded of an atmosphere. It is obvious to anyone who knows the Eastern side of America that no such loneliness could exist there. The introducer had talked of loneliness compared with his own existence in New York. We had thought of loneliness as we have experienced it in Oriental countries. We had thought of camping near by, of sketching about the mine, of seeing, under his supervision, something of the actual life of this mining village. Instead of the half-isolated pioneer's house we found this colony park, these neat dwelling houses, tennis courts, men and girls at play, a butler and a library lined with dark wood and books. Mr. B—— gave us all the courtesy that self introducing strangers could expect, gave us curious information; but it was evident in his manner that he did not want us camping round the mine. Our interview over, courteously but unmistakably he shooed us away. Later we learned that this region was on strike. Things were possibly tense. Two roughly dressed strangers, how could he be certain—?

During the time at his disposal he told us thrilling facts about that part of this little world. Here we were at the edge of the great Pennsylvania coal basin where the position of the immigrant has been much that of the slave in ancient Rome, held in bonds of hunger rather than of law, but who shall say less efficiently?

The 100 per cent American shows an increasing reluctance

to do the dirty work of the country. Little need is there for him to stoop, since a host of polyglot, half illiterate, almost inarticulate newcomers are at hand to shoulder Society's burden. This huge coal valley is largely worked by imports from peasant Europe. Driving down the valley the stranger might be forgiven for believing himself in Holy Russia, the villages on the main road exhibit such a combination of dirt, poverty and cupolas of Greek churches. Slavonic Europe has concentrated here and, in concentrating, has stagnated. Succeeding generations have followed one another, keeping the customs of the native land in ignorance of or despite American laws and habits of conduct, taking their wives from other villages still under the old European dispensation or even sending back money to Europe to import women as brides for men they have never seen.

We remembered the village we had recently passed through, and the strange tongue in which the boys had played their American game. Each village was a self contained unit, centered round the mine, the stores (probably in the mine's subsidy) and the church (perhaps). It was easy to believe what Mr. B—— said about them, that American culture penetrated little, and even bride purchase was the rule. The price of a good looking girl for a wife was some two hundred and fifty dollars, paid to the father, who must provide the trousseau. The girl, although tricked out in chain-store finery and even educated at the American public schools, had no choice in the disposal of her hand. The husband paid his money and got his wife on approval for a week. If she did not satisfy, she was sent back and the money refunded. Here I suppose was a loophole for a clever girl; she might prove herself to be deliberately unsatisfactory. We did not learn if damage or hire could be claimed by the girl's family, but the virginity obsession does not seem to have very much weight. Of Oriental origin,

probably imported during the Crusades, it is by no means important in many a peasant class of Europe. Mr. B—— had been recently distressed by the marriage of a pretty girl in one of the villages under his control. She had been in love with a young man but, on the word of her father that an older man had paid the necessary price, she quietly married without protest. There had been no necessity; the girl was American born, educated in American schools; but she had not the strength of mind to rebel against custom.

We have checked this information from other sources. This seems to be common in the isolated immigrant mining villages; but an almost similar subjection of genuine American women is still prevalent in the remote villages of Maine, Kentucky and Oklahoma; though perhaps without the custom of deliberate sale.

But here, coupled with this subjection, was an almost universal enthusiasm for education. Nothing was allowed to stop the children from going to school. Mr. B—— described how after a terrible blizzard the men had formed up in a phalanx and, making of their bodies a snow plough, had burst their way to school through the drifts carrying the children along in their wake.

The fact that mining was such a specialized man's job left the women much leisure. Recently this reserve of female labour was discovered by cheap shirt makers, who had set up mills for the making of reach-me-down linen, practically sweating the workers, since there was no competition. At first the mine managers had offered no objection to this new occupation, which was an assistance to the family budget and had, perhaps, helped to keep the wages of the miners on a lower scale. But now in the strike they found that the families contrived to live on the earnings of the wives and daughters, which had prolonged the strike to serious lengths. Although the whole mining community was

standing thus on the women's shoulders, no improvement had been made in their status. In another part of the valley a lady told us that she had seen a miner's wife take off her shoes and stockings and carry the husband over a stream. The lady was a keen advocate of Woman's Rights. She upbraided the man for his lack of chivalry. Did he dare to call himself an American? she cried.

He merely removed his pipe from his mouth, stared at her heavily and answered:

"Aw, what's de fuss? If she didn't who would?"

At last Old Bill suggested that we should make a start, and told us of a short cut over the mountains.

We switched on our head lamps, picked our way back through the mine yard, through the wood, and at the end of the village turned to the right instead of the left. This time a black solitude closed round us. The rough road sprang into the glare, flashed by us and dropped behind. Road, road, road over some kind of scubby moorland. A mad hypnotism took possession of us. The squirrel in its cage did not seem to spurn the wheel round more uselessly than did we. We dropped into a gully where pieces of mine material, sleeping or dead, decorated the road's edge; then we began to climb. Up, up went the road until it was clasping the edges of a precipice, growing steeper as it rose. The poor old "Hearse" was already on the lowest gear. Suddenly a steeper corner seemed to rear, and at that moment the clutch began to slip. The car faltered and stopped.

Here was a predicament. To the left, a precipice of unknown depth; to the right, a ditch; beneath us, a slipping clutch and an old, powerless engine. No room in which to turn, for there was scarce room in which two cars might pass. I eased her gently down hill until we found a shallower spot in the ditch, where I backed the car, hoping to



get her out again. Then I crawled under the car to tighten the clutch. At the first turn the wrench broke.

"What are we to do?" asked Jo.

"Echo answers, what?" I said.

At that moment a light showed on the steep curves above. We signalled for the car to stop, but uselessly. It passed without slackening speed. I could not blame the solitary driver within. The night is dangerous to the single motorist almost anywhere in America.

With a hammer and cold chisel I managed to give the nut a little more play. Would it lift us out of the ditch? I let in the clutch cautiously. Hurrah, it held. We climbed out of the ditch and again reached the bad corner. Towards the edge of the precipice the road was flatter. I hugged it as closely as I dared. Labouring, the "Hearse" took the turn. This was the steepest corner. We zig-zagged to the top and entered another interminable moor. At last we came to the crest and saw far below us a sparkle of lights scattered along an invisible valley, the great anthracite field of Pennsylvania. The descent was even steeper than had been the climb; our brake drums were worn. After this experience we fitted new brake drums in Pittsburgh. Twenty minutes later we came to a cross road where the tar began. We had traversed Old Bill's short cut.

Meanwhile what of a camp?

We knew that we were speeding down the centre of the great coal valley. All was in darkness except now and again where huge works showed a blaze of light, though sometimes they loomed up at the edge of the road black and silent. Here and there we passed dim little villages with their paltry looking shops, or small towns with strange names, Centralia, Paxinos, Shamokin, a Mount Carmel to fit the new Bethlehem. This was all land of toil, no tourists loitered here, no overnight lodgings or Bide-A-Wees, none



of that cheery punning which marked the roads of New England, no Step-Inn or Dew-Drop-Inn. We stopped at the gasoline stations but no one had ever heard of a camp ground.

"We will have to drive all night," I said to Jo.

The car was old; the headlamps were myopic, and the glitter of youth had dimmed in them. Cars with tremendous searchlights came bearing down on us, dazzling me so that at times I had to halt, afraid of plunging into the ditch. This did not add to the enjoyment of night driving. Twice we thought that we had found a camp ground, but the first was only a dead dance hall in a copse, the second, a real estate proposition. The strident urgency of the latter concerning the need of a home struck us with some bitterness. There were no roadside conveniences, no barbecues or hot dog stalls; and it was curious how the lack of these common objects of the American scene seemed to emphasize the solitude and poverty.

At length, after passing through Paxinos, we espied a refreshment stall wedged under the railway embankment. Our decision to drive all night suddenly weakened. We curved in under the broad eaves. There were hot dogs and mustard. And a young man with a certain air of jollity gave us permission to camp behind the stall, and invited us to sit by his stove.

We ran up our tent without delay and rolled into our quilts with grunts of satisfaction. Even the loud and repeated passage and the booming bells of the coal trains hardly disturbed our sleep.

Next morning, at a junction, we noticed a strange figure trying to coax a recalcitrant cow down a scrubby bank. The man wore a broad palmetto hat, a smock and loose trousers; but what caught our attention was the fashion of his hair, which hung to his shoulders. A massive beard

completed this unexpected sight. Dancing about in the brush in chase of the cow was a boy similarly dressed, minus the beard.

A mile along the road we drew in at a booth.

"Them fellers?" said the red faced host. "They're called Mennonites. Lots of 'em round about here. Barbecue? Yes, I got some. Want pickles?"

"As I was saying," he went on, smearing the pickles thickly on the pork, "there's a lot of them fellows round about here. But you missed the treat. Y'ought to have been here last week. Had a conference they did. You never saw such a collection. There was round bearded ones and short bearded ones and long bearded ones, and what with them what wears buttons and them what wears hooks and eyes and them what wears tapes, according as the Lord has commanded them— They're all Mennonites, so to say, but they has different ideas about what God likes 'em to wear or how He wants their hair cut. Sends 'em special spiritual messages about it so they say. I heard that one of them branches, a short time ago, got a special message that they might use Ford cars. I ain't sure that it was only Fords, because I don't suppose the Lord's so set on being advertisin' agent for Henry, as you might say; but I reckon He'd draw the line anywheres beyond a secondhand Chevi- or a 1921 Buick. Though I believe some of those younger ones don't keep their ears so close to the keyhole of the Kingdom of Heaven as they should by rights. Why, some of 'em goes about looking most like ordinary folks, just as though they don't believe that God has ousted 'em completely for getting a hair cut. But they're pretty good sort of fellows, warm too. I always think it's kind'a queer how them fellers what's in God's confidence, as they claims, always manages to get on so well in this here world; these here Mennonites and Quakers and M'ravians and so on; spe-

cially after what the Bible says about that Mommon of unrighteousness. See what I mean?

"The Conference? Oh, yes. That was last week. They come from all over the States and even from up in Canada too. They was going to discuss this here plan of going off



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to Paraguay. They're pacifist fellows, they are. Want to turn the other cheek all right, but would like to find some kind'a place where there's less likelihood of getting the first slap, see, where there's not so much need of this here cheek turning. So Paraguay says they can come and have a territory there and not have to be soldiers.

"Though mind you, it will be a loss to these parts when they do move out. They're a good, steady, saving folk and careful farmers. I don't mind the way they do their hair, ain't no business of mine. Live and let live is my motto."

We were overjoyed at the wit and rich vernacular of our

Barbecue seller and could have sat there the whole afternoon, but another car drove up and our host turned to the newcomer. A local election was pending. Notices plastered to trees, sheds, barns and public places clamoured of the varied virtues of not very attractively photographed but ambitious citizens. A political discussion swept away our host's racy humour. We, having finished our Barbecues and a bagful of salted peanuts apiece, resumed the road.

In the fields we could see the Mennonites cleaning the crops, or in the orchards spraying the trees. On the road were Mennonites in their old-fashioned buggies, the husbands broad brimmed and hirsute; the wives bonneted and clad in righteous bunchiness. The children were miniatures of their parents. In the small town, where most of the names over the shops were German and the shopkeepers spoke a strange English, often inverting the sentences, the Mennonites walked sedately, arming their women folk along the pavements. One addressed me as I was waiting for Jo who was shopping.

"Good day, Brother. Where are you from?"

He wished us a good journey and passed on.

On leaving the town we encountered one of those Brothers to whom God had given an automobile dispensation. He was a wholesale compromise. His brim was cut; his hair no longer than ducks' tails; his beard would hardly have disguised a British naval officer; he wore buttons. The vanities of this world hovered close about him. He must have had far more trouble keeping the devil at a distance than had those old out-and-outers who repudiated even hooks and eyes and whose Sunday dinner was ritualistically pork and beans and apple pie.

We camped that night at an amusement park, one of those countrified Coney Islands where roller skating rinks, dance

halls, merry-go-rounds, switchbacks and other riotous apparatus provided mechanical jollity. The night was cool and misty so the place was poorly patronised. The skating rink was closed; the dance hall echoed with the languid blues of saxophones uninspired by the few couples on the floor; the barkers for the knockabout mechanisms were tepid. Behind was a park with a swimming pool where a few people in vivid bathing dresses lolled on a raft in the growing dusk.

In New England the country was to a large extent under the dominance of the cities. New York spread her arms wide, so did Boston, and even the middle sized manufacturing towns contributed, sowing advertising material, refreshment stands, road houses, etc., on all sides. The contrast between town influence and raw country was that from riches to poverty. Here in Pennsylvania, once away from the coal valley, the evidence showed a richness in the countryside. As we have said the hot dog stalls almost disappeared; so did the advertisements. In consequence of the diminishing clamour of the wayside posters, those advertising the county fairs stood out with a greater prominence.

We had already passed many a county fair ground but hitherto they had stood empty, the race track, cattle show sheds, parade grounds looking enticingly bucolic, a reminiscence of the days of David Harum rather than of this prohibition-*cum*-gasoline epoch; favouring the Old Adam rather than the New Eve. Now, the season for the fairs was approaching us, or rather, as we went southward and westward, we were approaching it. Three annual migrations flow over the States, the harvesting, the fairs, and the Floridans. The first goes northward with the crops; the second follows as soon as the farmers have the money for



their produce; and the third retreats in a contrary direction as the inhabitants of the colder states feel the raw grip of winter's clutch. In Maine they say that going to Florida is as cheap as heating a house during the winter. Up to this time the advertisements had promised future fairs, but now we had come at last into the Fair region and found us a fair at Ebensburg.

Once within sight of the town a current of cars set in that way, including every kind from the town magnate's Cadillac to a heap of farm lads piled into the grunting wreck of a 1917 Ford. The fair parking ground was an immense field already half occupied by the cars ranged in lines. At the crest of the field was the show ground with tall white exhibition buildings, streets of booths, refreshment stalls, colored banners; a vagrant carnival with its switchbacks, Ferris wheel, hobby horses, motor cycle tracks and freaks.

Incongruity ruled. Gypsies of Serbian origin wheedled us into their tents and tried almost forcibly to search us for our purses; far more blatant than gypsies are allowed to be in any other place. Motor car gypsies these, careering the roads in car loads of soiled but picturesque finery, having lost none of their racial vim by exchanging the horse collar and the whip for the jack and the spanner. Here a man, with a weighing dial slung to a tripod, was keeping up a flow of witticisms and wise-cracks as he tempted people to have their weight guessed. He bargained to guess your weight within three pounds or forfeit a prize; but he failed seldom. His expert tongue rambled on as he ran equally expert hands down the figure of the victim with frank comments which made the women titter; wit adjusted to the countryside's humour. Barbecue and root beer stalls were under the auspices of the various churches and were kept by white clad bartenders and ladies with comic head gear and brusque manners. There were lotteries with big

vertical roulette wheels which, it was said, were disguised gambling apparatus in the places where the police were complaisant; but dispensed indigestible confectionery or garish ornament where the guardians of the law were less venal. Ring dollar games, bicycle race games, shooting galleries, baseball games, football games, all the fun of the fair. And, through the streets of gaiety, went the country folk, the elder ones still preserving the airs of a pre-aeroplane era, the younger tricked out in all the finery of the mail order catalogue; more than a century between the two generations, almost a whole civilisation from the horse-buggy and the long skirt to the car and the kilt.

Amongst all that efficiency in money wheedling, a shock haired old figure caught our attention; he seemed so different from everything that surrounded him as he sat there on a coping squeezing mournful notes from an old accordion. We dropped a dime into the hat from sheer sympathy and fellow feeling. He thanked us with a foreign accent, and we stopped to enquire the country of his origin—France, of all places! We spoke to him in his own tongue, and his face lit with pleasure. Often the immigrant prefers not to talk his native language, feeling that it confesses an inferiority; but a Frenchman seldom makes more than a servant, never a friend, out of a learned lingo.

"Ah, Monsieur et Dame," he cried. "You see me here humiliated. And yet, not so much perhaps. What will you? A man should not be ashamed to earn what he can or how he may. Alas! They have little consideration for age in this land. 'We cannot use you,' they say, 'you are too old.' And yet I assure you I do not feel old. I feel quite capable of work; and who should be the judge of that if not the man himself? But they say, 'No, go away, you are too old. You are useless.' A sad thing to hear I can assure you, Useless. And so I say to my wife, 'If I can-

not work I will play up there at the fair. I do not ask for charity but for a recompense. My wife she cannot understand my point of view. She sees shame in it. I say to her, 'Shame lies not in the act but in the reason.' Is that not so? I feel no shame; I do not beg, I protest. After all a man is always a man. He must do something. But my wife she has hidden herself in the crowds so that she shall not see me degraded. But Monsieur et Dame, what do you think? Cannot a man turn his talents to honorable account seeing that this remorseless country forbids a man to work merely because his hair is grey and his back a trifle bent?"

We assured him that indeed from our point of view honour lay on his side; we said that we were little better ourselves, being artists and thus offering our talents in a like manner to the public. We added another quarter to our previous gift and, wishing him luck, moved on. As we went the sad wheeziness of his tune burst out once more. He played a melody of broken backed jazz, doubtless hoping that its National character would be more effective in seducing pennies from American pockets; but it was a jazz infinitely forlorn, latinized and languid, a jazz to which poor old Pantaloon might have pranced on withered shanks.

The big buildings housed a variety of things which the country values; man's competitive spirit manifesting itself as early as the age of four. Who could write the neatest alphabet, who could draw the best pussy cat, who could do the best school exercises? School children's vanity merging into grown man's vanity; who could grow the biggest tomatoes, who could produce the best apples? That spirit of universal warfare which has cursed man ever since Abel got what he deserved at the first agricultural show. Here a plebeian looking doctor, his face pleated by his consistent lack of humour, was presiding over a booth filled with charts

of death and horror, selling bacteriological fear to the multitude; and, next to him, an annex to his show, was a model of the country farm, proving that at least ninety per cent of the farm folk ought to die of typhoid fever from the seepings of the sewage into their drinking water. Here were radios, so that the farmer's wife could do her churning in time to a



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jazz orchestra, two hundred miles away. Here were tractors, and ploughs with a dozen shares, pumps and separators and vacuum milkers, proving that the good old dung-ridden farm of our childhood had become a place of clanking machinery from attic to cellar, so that you wonder how they kept the gasoline out of the butter; and the farmer himself was nine tenths mechanic and one tenth hodge. Small wonder that the new generation looks unlike the old.



But the change is obviously superficial. Man changes his aspects, not his nature. The race track was as enthralling as ever, much more enthralling than a motor track. Outside the main building was a car built up into a small proscenium. In it, shaded by purple velvet curtains, was a woman with a bleak aspect. A man with a shabby frock coat and long hair was haranguing the attentive crowd.

"Every one of you knows the power of the moon," he cried. "Which one of you would lay down the sill piece of a fence when the moon was on the wane? What would happen to it? Why it would rot before the year was out, and well you know it."

The audience nodded assent. In spite of their tractors and radios they knew what the old moon would do to that sill piece. Never sleep in the light of the moon, or you'd get night blindness; watch crazy folks when the moon was full; don't plant roots when the moon was waxing or you'd get all green and no bulbs. Yes, in spite of their tractors and vacuum milkers, they poured out their quarters to the astrologer to get a peep behind the curtain of Fate. Balanced between yesterday and tomorrow, perceiving the absurdities of the past no more than understanding the marvels of the future, small wonder that a twilit confusion reigned in their judgments, producing that strange blend of nonsense which Mr. Mencken culls so acidly for his Americana. Some day that same Americana may be offered as a proof of a fine though twisted simplicity; absurdity is almost always attractive, but not so is acidity.

The carnival had almost an arena to itself, drawn a little to one side of the general booths. An associated combination of traveling shows, gigantic umbrellas of mechanisms which folded up and packed onto lorries for transport. Vagrant sensation. Spidery and dangerous looking with a creakiness of the joints as the strain came on them. We



wandered through slowly, sketching. The show men were interested; they hoped for publicity. Outside the tent in which was the monkey-automobile race track, Jo began to draw the eloquent chininess of the proprietor. He at once invited us into the show, free of charge. The monkeys, poor mites strapped in their cars, gazed about them with miserably hanging jaws.

"All done by kindness, Gentlemen," cried the fat man. "See how they loves me."

He poked a fat finger at a gaping monkey. It knew better than to bite, but contented itself by scratching hard at the body of the car into which it was strapped, its nails working by reflex action on the nearest spot to the focus of eternal irritation.

"You drawing them monkeys what escaped?" asked a lean young man in a tattered straw hat.

"However did you get them back?" we asked noncommittally.

"Them two comes back on their own accord," said the help. "The others we got located gradually. Got scared by the automobiles and took to the trees."

"Did they seem glad to be home?" we asked.

The help smiled cynically.

"Guess they found it wuss outside than in," he said. "And ain't it always like that most times? This yer liberty stuff, all right shouting for it when you ain't got any; but when you gets it, why then you're scared. That's how it is with most folks. Not with me though. You don't tie me down. Gets pretty near it sometimes, but somehow I always scares off at the last moment."

He watched Jo drawing the proprietor.

"That's kind 'a like him," he admitted. "Fact is, I only just got back to this job," he went on, evidently in

need of a confidant. "Ya see I pretty near got stuck that last time. Nice girl she was too; 'bout the nicest I ever come acrost. Stayed six months in that town I did. Job in a garage. Say, that's the nearest I ever got to being married in my life. But the nearer it came, the less I liked the idea. I mean me, there, you know, coming home every blessed night—and kids—me—with kids—babies spluttering over yer. No. I just couldn't see it. Not but what it wasn't difficult to go, mind you. Nice girl she was, real nice. But I just couldn't see myself—not really. So that's just how it was. Say, ain't life hell sometimes though? Just like them poor b—— of monkeys as you might say—only the opposite really—"

He picked them up and, smacking them down onto the electric track, turned on the current. Helpless in their little cars, the monkeys were carried scampering round the track, their eyes dazed with a half habituated scare, their bodies wrenched now this way now that, as the cars took the sudden curves, their long nails clawing incessantly and in bitter earnest at the painted tin sides which interposed between their fingers and their itching hides.

Up at the race course a crowd had gathered around a truck on which a stand had been erected. The eaves were festooned with pennants inscribed with places from highest North to farthest South, evidences of much travel. On the truck a long faced man with hanging mustaches and a wide curly brimmed hat was haranguing the crowd and waving a frying pan. There was so old-fashioned an air about him, about his mustache, his hat and his frying pan, that we loitered to listen, but were too far away. However, he stepped down from his elevation and three lads took his place. A piano was lashed to the back of the driver's seat

and while one of the youths pounded the keys the other two dashed into rollicking fiddle tunes of a hundred years back.

We have taken part in Swedish fiddling contests, and here was the American counterpart. These boys fiddled, they did not play the violin, nor claimed to. With a characteristic music lively and abrupt in nature, the chief effects were produced by the vigor and rapidity of the bowing and the harshly accentuated beat. Such music was composed to fit in with the thump of the hobnailed heel and the lusty swing of the dancers. The well known "Turkey in the Straw" or the "Arkansas Traveller" are the arch types of such melodies, and may well be compared with the Swedish Hambos and Polskas. There is nothing borrowed from Sweden here, however; this is old English in origin; but the hobnail, the heavy boot and the gut string have dictated the qualities of both. There is no light gliding step possible to the country boot; stamp and swing rules the dance and the tune also.

How they played, those boys. They played not as the folk-lorists, half patronising the old music, but as though they were the live nerves of a real dance. And a real dance it is still.

Up in the Adirondacks we had driven through the night some miles to a barn dance. No anachronism there, no revival. The lusty lads and lasses romped in a full two score of different measures under the light of the swinging gasoline lanterns. The fiddlers sawed away at the still appreciated tunes of their grandfathers, holding their fiddles often below their breasts, as also do the older Swedish fiddlers. For different melodies they shifted the tuning of the instruments. The master of ceremonies called out the figures

and the actions—"alleman right—swing your partners—chain—alleman left—repeat—"

"Hey," cried one of the fiddlers to me in the excitement, "that's a proper kind of dancing. There's life in that, hey? We don't like your round and round hug dancing; it's so darned monotonous."

They danced to sweat, did those Adirondack farm hands, and thus did these Pennsylvania fiddlers play, stamping their feet, swinging their bodies, tossing the laughter and jest to and fro. And how the audience loved it. No other show in the fair was as popular. The pennies and nickels rattled into the old man's frying pan which he was using as a begging bowl. There was no chance of talking to them; they were by far too popular; though we did get a few words with the old man. He was the father. They travelled about the country playing as they went. Other fiddlers? Plenty of them, only he bet that his sons were the best team we would find. For instance had we heard of that old fiddler that Henry Ford got hold of? Well, there was a man in this fair now who had beaten Ford's man off the platform; and even he couldn't better his sons. Although being their father he shouldn't say so perhaps.

The red headed fiddler was now performing a trick act, fiddling with all sorts of domestic implements instead of a bow, a rolling pin, a ruler, a walking cane, a medicine bottle and, when the father had returned from his round, he seized the frying pan and played with the handle of that.

"And the pianist's clever too," said Jo. "He's got a most peculiar technique, something I have never heard anywhere else. Odd and personal. I'd like to know exactly how he does it."

But the fair was not the place in which to make enquiries.

The old father had told us that from here southward we would find fiddlers a'plenty and as, after the experience of the other night, we had determined to eschew night driving, we left the gates and sought the "Hearse" in the parking field. It was not difficult to find. You had but to cast your eye over the tops of the coaches and where one stood out a full foot and a half above its fellows, there was the "Hearse."

That night we slept in a green alcove opposite to a wayside refreshment stall. When I say we slept, at least we lay down. We had not come so many miles from Ebensburg. This was the first really fine day of the week and tomorrow was to be the last one of the fair, so that the procession of cars, either coming from or going to the ground, was almost continuous. Lying there trying to sleep we could well believe that the whole countryside had poured itself onto the high road.

Two days later, after having paid a visit to Johnstown, made famous by the devastating flood, but nevertheless looking very unwashed now with thirty-eight years of soft coal grime laid on since, we were passing across a ridge of the Alleghenies. Suddenly we cried out simultaneously:

"Fiddler George."

Caught by surprise I halted the car abruptly, to the annoyance of a motorist following me rather closely, who cursed me in fluent words as he swerved by. I backed carefully. On the opposite side of the road was a small shanty for mild refreshments, an ordinary enough roadside booth had it not been for the dancing platform built alongside in a scoop of the woods. Over the shanty was a board on which was written:

"Fiddler George's Place."



We tumbled out of the car, broke a bottle of pop and began to ask questions of the people inside. To our surprise we found that Fiddler George was one of the lads we had seen at the Fair. He did not as a rule tour with the others but, on this occasion, had been taken to Ebensburg to swell the company. The wife, a young woman in print and a sunbonnet, three robust children and the wife's sister, a long limbed girl of thirteen, with bobbed hair clasping an early Italian face, were the inhabitants of this tiny shed. Fiddler George himself had just come back, his Ford car stood in the lee of the hut.

We praised his playing.

"Father and the other two are gone on already," he said. "They'll be following the fairs now right up into New York state."

He confessed that he had done quite a bit of fiddlin' in the last few days. We then brought over our guitars and, sitting in the little shack, played Spanish pieces while he retorted with American, more and more of those descendants of the jig and the heel-an'-toe which have put heart into country heels—"Fiddler's Reel," "Irish Washerwoman," "Can't You Dance the Hog and Eye?" "Shufflin' Feet," "Old Dan Tucker," "Shortenin' Bread," "Wind in the Barley," "Ida Red" and a number of others.

"My old dad, he knows a million tunes," said Fiddler George, "but he don't play any more now; he just does the barking for my brothers."

"Was he a fiddler then?" we asked.

"Fiddler? I should say he was," cried George. "An' Gran'father and Great-Gran'father too. There's four generations of us always made our money at fiddling, so they say. Why, I tell you, our family fiddled when it was pretty near dangerous to fiddle, yes sir. Some of them old time preachers 'ud get after a fiddler like he was poison. A fel-

low had to be mighty fond of fiddling those days. And, queer thing too, you could dance to the singing; but if you danced to the fiddle you was being wicked. Ain't ideas crazy?"

"This is a solitary spot," we said. "Do you get good gatherings?"

"They all comes in cars," answered George. "Give us a fine Tuesday or Saturday and the floor is full. All the young uns round about here dances the old dances pretty good; and knows the figgers too. And then the folks coming along the road stops off. Y'd be surprised how the old dancing holds on."

He told us that his old father had been a famous fiddler and had made lots of money, but he had a taste for speculation and gambling and so had remained poor. Now he declined to compete against his sons. The three travelled all over the States, North, or South as the weather changed according to the seasons.

"Did you see that brother who played the piano?" asked George.

"Yes," said Jo, "and I noticed his technique particularly."

"I'll tell you something about him," went on George. "One time he thought he would like to be a real professional piano player, see. So he went to see the Director of the Cincinnati School of Music. Played to him he did. And what do you think that fellow said? Why, he said to Harry: 'Look here, Boy. You got something special now, not like nobody else's. I could teach you all right, but first I got to unteach you pretty near all you knows. And after that how can I guarantee that you are going to turn out a first class piano player? No, sir. That depends on yourself. But right now you got something kind'a special. Why don't you go ahead, develop it, make yourself more so,

see?' An' Harry he guessed that he did see and he's trying right now."

"Well, he surely has something original," said Jo.

"That's so," agreed George, "but he says he ain't there yet, not properly. He's going after something, and when he gets it he says it'll knock 'em."



## CHAPTER IX

### A REVIVAL AND AN INTERDICTION

PITTSBURGH is at once a fulfilment and a revelation. It easily fulfils, as few anticipations do fulfil, any ideas of general smokiness, sootiness and steel-worksiness. The great smelting ovens were as impressive as we could desire; the rolling mills squeezed out huge masses of incandescent metal; the blasts of natural gas roared through the tuyères; strangely tinted flames on tall chimneys, like great paint-brushes charged with livid stains, coloured the flat, cloudy floor of the night; all this was as we had expected. But what we had not looked for was the beauty of Pittsburgh; not that dramatic, sinister beauty which every traveller talks of, but the ethereal almost Italian quality of the Pittsburgh silhouettes drawn in the murky air. The hills and the smoke give nature the opportunity of striking off daily

a hundred variations of the Japanese, so that you can almost think of Pittsburgh as of the ogre turned fairy.

The camp ground was in the park, which was so big that we lost ourselves in it looking for the camp. The park enclosed an immense stretch of hill and canyon, one edge overhanging the valley of iron works, the other abutting the town or suburbs; it contained a golf course, a race track, an open air theatre, a zoo, and lonely swards swept by sinuous hill-climbing roads. These huge parks, almost in the very heart of the city, seem to be characteristic of the American town plan and emphasize the lack of those numerous small squares and gardens which are typical of England. The camp ground was in a grove, at one end of which stood a building where a number of compartments offered the camper gas cooking stoves and separate dining rooms for use of which all the payment demanded was the camper's signature in a book. Pennsylvanian hospitality! From the elevation of the camp, set at the very apex of the park, we had a splendid view of the city ridges, fading one after the other into the blur of grey fog, the grosser details obscured, the outlines idealised.

However, we were not allowed to remain long there. We had a verbal introduction to the stepfather of a friend in Paris, a young opera singer; and a telephone message resolved at once into a hospitable command:

"You break up that camp of yours and come right down here." For the said stepfather kept a hotel. It was, we found, a hotel of old Germanic reputation and, in its day, had been the biggest and most modern hotel on the main street. But time had caught it up and had passed on. It cowered now amongst the monster buildings of the last decade. Inside it had a spaciousness which does not belong to now-a-days; the rooms were immense, the beds almost big enough for the seven sleepers; it had no elevators but



breathed that quiet servant-destroying atmosphere of forty years ago. The owner was not at home when we arrived, but a burly shirt sleeved waiter, German to the finger tips, welcomed us and served a substantial meal in a deserted dining room. As we ate we wondered at the air of emptiness without decay which dominated the place. "There can't be any prejudice left now; the war is almost forgotten," we thought.

Our host came in to greet us as we finished the meal. In spite of his forty years in America he still retained a strong German intonation; indeed how could he lose it, since all his help and most of his friends spoke in a similar way or in their native tongue; for Pittsburgh has a large German section. We exchanged news and he then left us to our own devices for the evening.

But this was a Saturday night. The tall towers in which, on a week day, the steel was stewing, were uncrowned with fire, damped down against the Sunday rest. The ranked organ pipes of chimneys were black against the stars. The cold arc lamps cast pools of greenish or lilac illumination into work yards undimmed by drifting clouds of steam or undecorated by glowing ingots in trucks strung on the tracks like ruby necklaces. The great works looked dead, as though that dreaded day had come when the last gasp of natural gas shall have been wrung from the generous earth. In the darkness here and there a flaming, cloud-illuminating blaze struck up from time to time; but most noticeable above all was a great sign on which the figures "57" glowed, the Heinz pickle slogan, as though it might say, "Iron may come and Iron may go but Pickles will be produced for ever."

The dark slums of the opposite river bank were silent. A few nights ago rival gangs of gunmen had been settling a political difference there with automatics, but on this first

evening Pittsburgh was resolved to give us no thrill of any kind. So we sketched some dramatic arrangements of advertisement boards illuminated against the night and then went quietly to bed.

During Sunday we came into closer touch with our host. He was one of those Germans who have consented to use America. His middle aged robustness was typically German; his tongue rolled German more readily than English, indeed in many ways he still lived in Germany; his hotel was German in atmosphere, and he was surrounded by the large Germanic population. Little pressure was there on him to become Americanized. And he loved musicians as much as he loved his beer. This we discovered by a lucky accident; for that Sunday afternoon a lady called on him, a visitor from distant Chicago.

They had not met for fourteen years. In those days she was a young violinist in the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and he, as now, kept this same hotel. She had been a girl just experiencing the joys and the difficulties of a first independence; he had owned the only hotel in the town which would accept musicians. For clearly there are disadvantages in lodging with musical instruments.

These facts appeared gradually through their reminiscences. Without deliberate intention the visitor showed us the odd and lovable qualities in our host's character. He had kept this musician's paradise not for mere gain; indeed few have dealings with artists from a gainful outlook. The good news must have spread like wildfire amongst the unmarried members of the orchestra; for here was a man who not only liked to house the outcasts but was reluctant to press his debts. Even more remarkable was his perspicacity. The one side of the hotel overlooked the street with its trams and general noisiness, the other gave onto a vista

of inferior roofs and sporadic but silent washing. So our host had his guests sign in under the qualities of their respective instruments, the more assertive ones, the cornets and trombones, bass fiddles and bassoons, he put on the front, where they could hold their own against the traffic; but the daintier, the violins, flutes, oboes or clarinets, he set at the back, where nothing would interrupt them except an occasional foghorn from the tugs on the river or the sirens signalling the changes of shift in the Homestead Iron Works.

He served us with cocktails amid strange elegies of old musical bohemians. But when the lady had finished her call and had gone I asked him:

"Tell me, was it the music or the musicians that interested you the most?"

"Well, I guess I like the musicians most," he answered. "I like the music too, but within reason. Not the way my wife does, for instance. Look here, we go to see a show; there's a nice girl in it, good figure, good legs, nice. I enjoy myself looking at that girl. But my wife she cries out: 'Oh, stop that girl, she sings false. Aie.' I say: 'Why do you spoil my fun? Isn't she a nice girl, hasn't she got nice legs? Yes. Well then. What do I care if she sings false or not? Eh?' Yes, I guess I like the musicians best. They ain't like ordinary folk, they've got something—something—" His mind struggled to find a word to express his meaning but failed, "Aw—Hell—just different, that's what I mean."

He smiled, a parental, Teutonic smile; and in the curly wrinkles round his eyes lurked some writing of remembrance, tender for those unconventional lodgers of his. They had taken his hospitality, had dodged his bills, had borrowed his cash and his overcoats, and had repaid him little except perhaps with a careless fondness. But who will say that he had invested his money ill? He had no returns perhaps in

raw per cent, but in the jewel casket of his souvenirs those musicians lay, the equal of any. And are not sweet memories cheap at any cost when the time comes and we realise that in all our life we have bought nothing else of permanent value? Perhaps here is the answer to Omar's question:

I wonder what it is the vintners buy  
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

We wondered more yet over the emptiness of the hotel.

The delightful humanity of the host was reflected in the staff. The burly waiter, looking like a rubicund chucker-out of saloon days, served us solicitously and evidently adored the boss. The maids, half articulate immigrants, who had tossed themselves with blind pluck innocently and ignorantly from slow peasant Europe to the turmoil of this novel continent, sang daily praises of their employers. The food was excellent, Germanic and substantial in kind, but owing an American dress to the supremacy of Heinz. Even the Irishwoman who scrubbed the stairs, and who had possibly contributed many of her hard earned pennies to the downfall of Bloody Britain, forgave us our bitter nationality in the general geniality of that hotel. Why then its phenomenal emptiness?

"Can people," we said to ourselves, "be so blind to quality and so enamoured of elevators that the mere fact of stairs and of baths at the end of the passage will drive them utterly away from the greater delights of spaciousness and humanity?"

"Uldine Utley, the fifteen-year-old child revivalist," said the notice board. We looked at our watch; the time of the meeting was within fifteen minutes. A few of those dried looking creatures, who in their very dryness seem to be specially prepared as tinder for the flames of religious

ecstasy, were climbing the steps on crinkled shoes. So we followed them in. The hall was huge, but a tribute to the revivalist's ambitions rather than to her success, for amongst the long furrows of unoccupied chairs the sprouts of human wheat were sparse. A lean young man in black, with a shoe-string tie for the Glory of God, ushered us into a pew and tried to sell us a volume of *Revival Echoes*, the fifteen-year-old preacher's special edition of hymns. In a grave voice he assured us that anything of an experimental nature had been rigidly excluded.

We looked about us at the small congregation, clustering there in that wide space as though it felt the chill of outer scepticism. For some days now the child had been holding her services, and this was all the result. In New York she had preached to her thousands. The great Aimee Semple McPherson, pride of Los Angeles, would not have submitted to such tepid neglect; she would have seized the Pittsburghians by the scruff of their curiosity and would have haled them here *nem. con.*

But after all, fifteen is but fifteen. At fifteen years the dynamic Aimee was still wearing the dancing shoes of sin and sewing embroidery on her underlinen. She had not passed through the education of a husband and a half, nor had fled the soul-clogging fidelities of Mr. McPherson. This child relied on her simplicities, on her singularity; but Pittsburgh passed by incurious, not seeking its salvation from the mouths of babes and sucklings.

The battle for souls opened with a bombardment by the orchestra. This was followed by some volley singing, of a non-experimental nature, "Throw out the Life Line," "The Old Time Religion," "Jesus Waits for Me;" and then the cornet, which had been upholding the voices with its yearning note, played a solo, clarion at first, but repeated with the mute stop, as though Heaven itself were answering



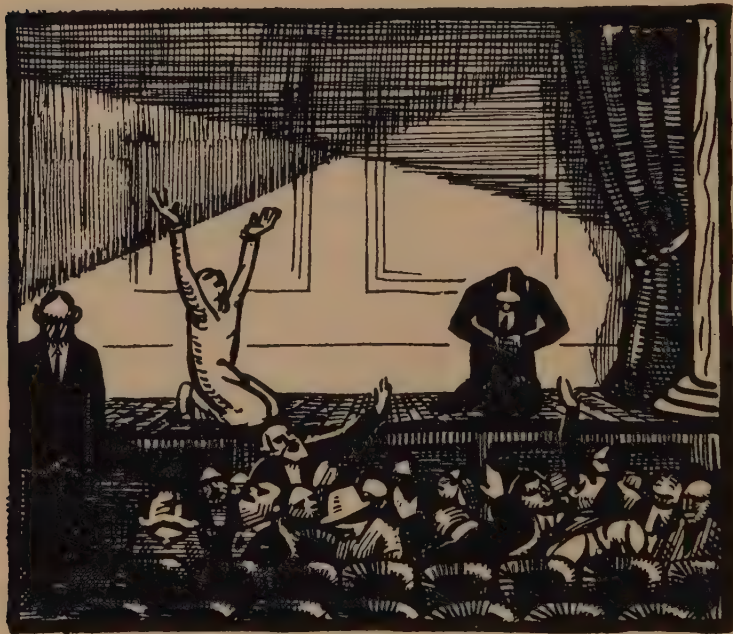
with an echo. The cornet put a good deal of emotion into his work, but we fear he was a mere hireling. Devotion was not his; he had been paid to play not to be converted, and, during the sermon, his attitude on the platform was one of unenthusiastic inattention.

A few extemporary prayers by a lank, black-coated assistant of sinister appearance worked up the meeting to the preacher. She came forward with a hint of studied coyness. Dressed in girlish white, she had an appearance of childhood only because of the cut of her clothes. There was little of the childish either in her face or in her voice. From her face she might have been twenty-five or even thirty. Her voice was rich and singularly melodious and gave us a shock of real pleasure; such an organ for eloquence was it. Her speech was simple and fluent and her words well chosen. She had what is rare in a revivalist, a sense of humour; but she had also, which is rare either in a revivalist or in a child, a streak of cynicism.

At first, the dull foghorn note of the conventional religious orator was almost absent from her natural, easy sermonizing, but as the progress of her emotion thickened in her throat the canting sing-song prevailed, and her real genius was submerged in the religious, fanatical automaton sweeping onward toward the sawdust trail carried forward by the impetus of its own hypnotic incantations.

For genius she undoubtedly possessed. Voice, eloquence and intelligence combined to make a remarkable personality. There was intelligent beauty in her main theme and treatment. It borrowed nothing from the modernized Everyman drama with which Sister McPherson disguises her harsh-voiced platitudes; it had none of the Ring Lardner-Dempsey-Babe Ruth vernacular violence, the natural product and patent of the Reverend Billy Sunday. No. The

discourse was on an old Bible story, Elisha and the Shulammite woman. The child analysed the tale with insight, both of a spiritual and of a literary nature. She astonished us. What might she have become? Critic? Poet? Actress? All of these were undoubtedly blended in her. She had



THE MOURNERS' BENCH

clearly a good dose of the artist's vanity; she wasn't purged of that part of old Mammon. It irked her sorely to see that small group of a mere hundred souls crouching in the huge hall. Her wounded vanity found vent in an expression of superiority to herself.

"When only two or three are gathered together we are still doing the Lord's work," she cried more than once or twice. The repetition betrayed her.

"Even if this stiff-necked city gives me but a hundred souls—"

Gives *me!*

"Before we have done we will sweep this darkened town with a flame of repentance. Your numbers shall be multiplied a hundredfold. Tho' we gain only one hundred it shall suffice."

Though her childishness was not so visible in her stage appearance as it was in her photograph, we could feel it clearly as she struggled with that audience. Then it became a real handicap. Her powers of domination were as yet not fully developed. The steel was soft; it would not strike sparks from the flint of emotional numbness. Her choir, her family, her male assistant lent her the background of their more mature dynamism. But in the effort to rekindle the embers of religious ecstasy her genius degenerated. The intellectual was suddenly downed by an emotional crisis. The Holy Roller dethroned the artist. We wondered whether the cynicism had not already begun to heed disillusion; and whether the final spiritual excesses were not themselves an effort to conquer the disillusion.

The work was clearly hard. In spite of the fact that many had come ready to indulge in ecstatic repentance, their eager response did not draw others from their seats. Two dozen perhaps had crept to the mourners' bench by the time the girl's sense-contact warned her to waste no more effort.

And then, in the orgy of repentance, we saw the last of her talent swallowed and blotted out. On her knees above the yammering sinners she too howled and prayed and tossed her arms.

The scene distressed us. We left.

"A great actress ruined," said Jo; which certainly illustrates a point of view.

There is little doubt that the great days of the American revival are over. From the Revivalist angle, the names of Henry Ford and Sears Roebuck might stand for Anti-Christ; for if any two men have contributed to the downfall of the old time religion, those two are the men, the one slashing at Puritanical Provincialism through education by wider contacts, the other by the means of standardised vanity. Neither a young man with a car of his own nor a girl in a new silk dress will easily be brought to see the vanities of this wicked world.

Yet some of the churches seem to borrow the arts of the revivalist, and are trying to attract by clamour and vulgarity, to the distress of the conservatives. For instance when a preacher is thus advertised:

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE HE IS AN ABSOLUTE KNOCKOUT  
COME AND SEE HIM, HE'S REAL BIG STUFF  
AND HOT STUFF TOO

some harm must be done to the more serious side of religion.

The recent attempts to raise the moral status of business, as an offset to the numerous business scandals of the last régime of financiers, have tended to confuse the ideas of many an innocently minded newspaper reader. Such statements as "Christ was the first Rotarian" are not meant to be grotesque. Essentially, America is a romantic nation, and it gilds all its even necessary acts in a halo of romance. The needs of the new industrial development have forced on them the romanticising of business and the religion of salesmanship; the herd accepts such dicta in good faith; it watches a hotel, for instance, get front page advertising by an ingenious exploitation of the Bible, when one hundred Boy Scouts marched through the streets with Bibles for the guest rooms. The simple public see the Glory of



God in this and the redemption of travellers, but not the advertising coup for the hotel.

Yet that old Puritanism totters. Even the sanctification of business is doing its little towards the ruin by destroying in men's minds the scale of true value. Thirty years ago no minister would have dared to criticise the value of revivalism; the revivalists were invited, paid. But now the enmity of a large part of the church is taking shape against the cult. It hinders rather than helps and by further damaging the sense of proportion works more havoc. Religious development in America during the next two generations will be of interest. Those in Europe who see this as only a country of progressive, rather dreary and rather dangerous standardisation would be surprised to find how many elements of explosive character this odd Piccalilli of peoples can contain; with Catholics and Fundamentalists, Wets and Drys, Industry versus the People, Nordics, Latins, Jews, Mexicans and Negroes, one law for the rich and another for the poor, none of which differences have any representation in the artificial political division of Republicans and Democrats, we may venture to question whether the country can be said to have come really of age yet and whether it can avoid many a future growing pain except by extraordinary fortune. Prosperity however is a good pain-killer.

On the day following, we pierced the mystery of the hotel's desertion. We were dining with friends who in themselves illustrate what is to Europeans one of the most romantic of the still romantic elements in the States. These two had spent their lives in ideal pursuits; *Docteur es Lettres* of Paris, cataloguing the works of a half-esteemed, late Renaissance painter, touring China and Japan to study their arts close at hand, writing delicate and carefully original lyric poetry; intense and mentally strenuous delights which are



really the greatest benefit that private means can confer on man, but which are usually overlooked when plutocrat and demagogue quarrel over the spoils. Suddenly, ruin crashed on them from outside. They had packed their bags for Europe, where an intellectual can still enjoy life at a price which would starve him in a garret here. The trunks were actually on the steamer. Telegram: "Take over charge of the new Art Department So-and-So University. Sole charge. Funds ad lib. Create from roots up to your own plans."

Scurry to the baggage room. Trunks off the steamer as the whistle blows. Yo Ho for So-and-So.

Isn't that Romance?

Jestingly these friends commented on our lodgings.

"We were amazed to hear where you were staying. How ever did you come to that place? Why it was raided by the prohibition officers only a week ago and is still under an interdiction."

*Wein und Gesang* indeed.

And on that very evening our host himself enlightened us.

"You don't know that they raid me a week ago. That was a job. Those political fellows they do that to me, just to be dirty. That's how it was. This dam' fool prohibition. Why everybody's got the stuff. But there's some of those political birds want to fix me good. So they put that job onto me. And it's a great nuisance too. You see it's a Federal case so I can't do nothing about it. If it was a civic case now I wouldn't worry. I'd fix that easy. Those State Judges they know how they got to tread, yes sir. But I tell you it's a scandal with these Federal Judges. They're there for life. They don't care what they do. You can't get at them. Why, I tell you, they aren't responsible, no they aren't. They just don't care and by gosh you can't make them. This is going to cost me a lot of money. Sure.

There's one judge though, he's fierce, Gee! But I got him fixed, thank goodness. You see he's got a son, and that son is a lawyer. Well now, if I engage that son in my defence his pop can't sit on the bench. That clear? So I got that fellow in my behalf, and I fix his pop that way. But I tell you, what with this prohibition and officers and spying and raiding—things is rotten, rotten. I tell you, what with these Federal Judges, what's not responsible and all I sometimes think I'll go back to Germany. By Golly! I do."

We knew nevertheless that he could never go back to Germany. It was but an exasperated threat. In spite of prohibition, in spite of non-responsible judges, he was held by an irresistible bond; he was a baseball fan. There is no baseball in Germany. He might threaten, he might growl, but, irrevocably, he is fettered to America, let the Federal Judges do to him what they will.



## CHAPTER X

### ALONG THE OHIO

THE Romantic Ohio—so popular in the nigger minstrel lays of the nineties—is born at the point of Pittsburgh where the new skyscrapers are clustering. Its mother is the Allegheny and its father the Monongahela, that brawny stream feeding the ironworks with barges and bearing the burdens of the city. The Ohio. We stood at the point where the old fort used to be and looked along the river of our quest. Somewhere, hence onward, floated the Show Boat to find which we had travelled from the Berkshire foothills; all the incidents of the road hitherto, fairs, fiddlers, revivalists, gas-hoboes, and even Old Friend Bill, had been but by-products.

We carried a letter of introduction to one Captain Lew M——, the address somewhere on the Ohio, (if not on the Kentucky River), but first try Point Pleasant, West Virginia. The Ohio is some eight hundred miles long. Captain

Lew must be described as a migrant, owner of a Show Boat—flat bottomed, floating theatre—packed with actors, scenery, musicians and engineers. We hoped to find him and to spend a few days in his society.

On the map the Ohio takes a flirt northwards, as though rejoicing at its sudden birth, then curving down again it rejoins the main road, the National Old Trail, at Wheeling. With eight hundred miles in front of us, we might well ignore this calligraphic flourish at the start of its long signature. Considering the time of the year we hardly believed that we would find Captain Lew as high up as Point Pleasant. He still lurked, we thought, somewhere south of Cincinnati or maybe up the Kentucky River itself, a long chase.

So without debate we directed ourselves to Wheeling by the shortest path and, looking for a camp ground, pushed on through a blinding rain storm first to Cambridge and then turned down towards Marietta. The road was uninterrupted but for one accident when a young fool tried to push himself in between the "Hearse" and a truck, all in movement. He was evidently one of those young men always in haste without reason; one of the common dangers of the American highway. The night was dark; a drizzle was falling in an ill-lit village street. He bounced from the "Hearse" to the truck and back to the "Hearse" again. He hit us almost like an explosion, tore across our front tire, twisted the lazy tongs of our luggage carrier into a cat's-cradle, dented the side of the "Hearse" and turned up the hinder end of the fender like a saucy drake's tail. I was glad to see that he was driving an almost new car which was torn down both sides for his foolishness. He would have protested his innocence but the evidence was clear against him; however, from the inside of the car a female voice interrupted, shrewish and foreign. I at once faded into the night, having no desire for polemics in the rain with a viru-

lent and half-incomprehensible woman. We might of course have claimed damages, but how to collect them would have been the question, with an address anywhere along the Ohio. And how could we begin to estimate the damage done to such a relic as the "Hearse" anyway? So we accepted our wounds with resignation, grateful indeed that they were no worse, kicked the bent parts straight in the morning, expended \$15 on a new tire, and drove on towards Point Pleasant and the search for Captain Lew.

From the town of Marietta the map showed us two roads but gave little indication which one was the best. So we drew up at a gasoline station on the edge of the town to enquire. The proprietor, who came courteously to answer our question, was not the rough mechanic type; no rakish cap, with somebody's advertisement flaunted over its spoon-bill peak, was cocked on his head; he wore no professional overalls. He had the neat habit of the business man, but the nearness of the South had suggested a florid line to the brim of his hat. A genial quarter of an inch extra of fat proved his good digestion and sleeked his outline. To answer our question he got a map published by his oil company and on it marked the road, then, eyeing both our New England license and our tattered fenders, he said:

"Had a bit of an accident I see; and a long way from home, too."

We described the crash, for the shock was still fresh and the tale eager on our lips.

He nodded his head slowly.

"There's careless ones enough," he agreed. "Youngsters bouncing about in these flivvers. But they're clever too." As if to illustrate his words, a lad in an old boat of a car, without fenders, clattered along the road, took opportunity



of the crossing to spin it on its heels at twenty miles an hour, and in a flash was off again in the opposite direction.

"But it isn't them has the accidents," said the plump man, nodding his head at the disappearing boy. "They may make your heart fair jump into your mouth at times, but they get through. It isn't these what get hit. They're like fleas. Spry, yes. It's these men of forty or thereabouts, men who've been on the roads eight years or more, who know everything, or thinks they do. Comes a moment when they gets too sure, see, then it hits 'em. And then maybe—if he ain't killed himself—why—he may be sorry he ain't sometimes—I know."

"The chance taker loses," I said, quoting from the illustrated warnings at the grade crossings.

"Chance taker," he challenged. "Why it's queer but it ain't always the chancy ones who get hit. Look at them boys, fr' instance. You can be too careful just as well; that's the trouble. Too careful, I'd say so. If you's careless it's liable to hit you in front; but if you's careful it's just as liable to get you in the back.

"There's a thing happened to me made me learn that fact; yes, and learn it dear too. My brother it was. Careful, I'd say. Took no chance, he didn't. I 'member he said to me once: 'Charlie, if you takes care there isn't much that can happen to you, see.'

"It was a locomotive," he said, "and him what always stopped at a grade crossing when he couldn't see clear both ways. I won't forget it as long as I live because, see, there was a queer business mixed up with that affair. Fr'instance, now, do you ever get these premonitions? Well then, what do you think of them? How account for the fact; something you ain't thinking about; wouldn't be likely to be thinking about even, and then—of a sudden—you know.

You know for sure, almost as if you had been told, see? How do you think that comes?

"Because it was just that way with me. Driving home I was, coming back from New Lexington. There's a grade crossing on the road, nasty place, been accidents there; and I saw that there had been another. Crowd, you know; and on the far side of the bank, but farther down, the bottom of a car, twisted.

"Nobody ever seems to know just what has happened; never do. 'Can't tell you, but I heard as somebody'd said as somebody else had told him that a blue car had been hit by a train.' No need to tell anyway. There was the car.

"Well, Jim's car was blue and into my head it jumped like a flash, what if it was Jim? It hit me, bang! just as if one of these fellers had boxed my ears. In a second I felt sure it was Jim what got hit, though why should I think such a thing with Jim a careful driver? I didn't even know he was travelling on that road; only the color of the car being the same, see. Then it came round that a man, a woman and a little girl had been in that car when the train got it. I kind'a knew it was Jim. The man and the woman had been taken off to the hospital in another car, but the little girl had been killed stone dead they said. And her they'd taken to a house near by. I got out and went down to that house.

"It was Jin all right, Jin they used to call her. I looked at her, and there she was. Neck. Instantaneous, they said, probably. She had golden curls, and they were all round her face, like Mary Pickford; the woman had fixed her up. Proud of them curls Jim was, wouldn't let 'em be cut. There she was like as if she slept, see. No scare on her face at all, as if it had got her without her knowing it. Yes, she looked just asleep, though you mightn't think it; but Jim he thought so too. Yes he did, that is if he thought anything.

"They told me that after they had stopped the engine he got out of the car and helped drag his wife and the little one out of the back. He even helped to lay them down on the side of the track, on the grass there. The little girl was dead, just like I told you, only looking asleep she was, see; but Amy, his wife, was alive, only stunned. They said it was real pitiful the way Jim went from one to the other, distressed like. 'Wake up,' he said to them, 'wake up, Amy, wake up, Jin, it's all right now.'

"Then quite suddenly he collapsed too, fell right on the top of them. Got his wrists broke he had, and all his ribs bust on the steering wheel. But little Jin being dead, they carried her to the house where I found her. Just like I knew I would. But how did I just know that? Because you see, it ain't as if I'd any cause to think of Jim at that place; for it ain't as if there's no other blue cars about. I don't think I even thought to ask what make it was. I didn't need to. I knew—"

He paused.

"She died too," he said. "Jim's wife. All broke up inside. Stayed unconscious for three days she did, and then just went. But Jim got better. He had helped them out of that car and didn't even know he was hurt, not till he woke up out of the chloryform. A hard wakening for Jim. A man's got a lot of sore regretting to do when a thing like that has happened to him. And it's not as if he'd been foolish. If he'd gone reckless maybe it 'ud have been worse for him; but then again it might have been better, see. I mean with Jim it was just too much care, and that made it all raw. Too careful.

"That was a bad place and well Jim knowed it. Accidents there before. It's masked both ways, and the houses so narrow that you don't hear the bell even if it is ringing; which sometimes it ain't. Jim told me he stopped dead at

that crossing. Then, seeing workmen on the opposite side, he made signs to learn how it was. And one fellow made him signs back, like he should come across; so Jim thought. But really the man was making signs that Jim should stay back there. Only these signs must have been kind 'a vague, so Jim thought they was the very opposite, see. So Jim, taking it that the road was clear, slaps in the low and starts across, and there he sees the engine right on the top of him.

"If he hadn't stopped there, careful, he'd a' been over long before; and even if he'd only slowed down he'd a' been in high, and by stepping on it he might have shot clear. But in low— What could he do? I guess he slammed the car around, as much as he had time. Instinct, you can't help that. But that made the back of the car get it. They say the engine picked up that car on the catcher like nothing. I saw the car afterwards on the other side of the track, busted wide open.

"One time I did ask Jim how it felt. But he said he didn't feel anything. Didn't hear anything neither though somebody did tell me that there was a fearful cry, but only one. I never told Jim that. He said when that locomotive tossed them up like that he thought only one thing. He thought he was being carried on for hours. Wasn't it ever going to stop? Yes, hours, he said. It seemed like to him they wouldn't ever get her stopped; that's what he thought.

"When Jim did get better he was kind of funny for a time. Why he used to go round looking for that fellow what gave that silly signal. Put it on him you see; couldn't bear to think it was his own fault; if it could be a fault, being too careful. But in time he got over that as well. Two and a half years since it happened now; but I tell you it stays right here with me as if it was yesterday. Sometimes it hits me that sharp as if I was just going to go in and see that little Jin laying there with her neck broke. I remember

how the woman of the house came to the door. She'd been crying too, but she said:

"We aren't meaning to receive anybody here if they come out of curiosity. Only relatives when they might identify her, see."

"And I said, 'Well, Ma'am. I ain't so sure but what I might be a relative, see.' And there she was. Like the woman said. 'Ain't she just like a picture?' Yes that's just what she said to me there. And she spoke the truth too.

"Since then life hasn't ever been quite the same. I got no children myself and somehow I'd come to consider little Jin as mine too, I mean I never thought of her as just only Jim's. And to see her there sudden, like that, with her neck broke— Though, as I say, she did only look asleep. I was glad of that. But I never got past wondering how I did come to know, like that—just as if I'd been told first."

His plump, good-natured face was not visibly perplexed or troubled. It had not been shaped for dramatic expression. And yet in his story he had contrived to achieve a kind of art. Clearly, he had told it often. Unconsciously it had shaped itself. Isn't Art merely the statement of something which we are divinely sure of? And in this story, as he told it, even his final perplexity was a part of his certainty.

The best road proved to be a short cut over the dirt; but, fourteen miles of discomfort to save fifty! It passed through a place bearing the name of Tupper's Plains, a gay topographical elbow jogged into the ribs of whimsy. However, beyond the Plains we came on the "Spirit of St. Vitus." It was, as a matter of fact, a car; a car which looked like a beetle on wheels. Four sunburned lads in overalls and farmers' hats were clustered on it, like large parasites attacking an unlucky insect. It was undoubtedly the oldest of the Fords, without fenders and minus the hood so that it looked



as though the parasites had already gnawed away part of its head. The sloping back, pointed like wing-cases, almost devoid of paint, was a dark brown smeared with rust and oil; on which the name was scrawled in white with the reversed "s" of the unhandy printer. The parasites clawed and banged it, and occasionally the thing coughed, shud-



THE SPIRIT OF ST. VITUS

dered and, as if it were a huge bombardier beetle, blew out a blast or two of smoke.

Behind the "Spirit of St. Vitus" a pretty refreshment stall invited us to lunch under a wide veranda. Luck is an odd thing. Had it not been for the "Spirit" we would hardly have halted there, and had we not halted there Goodness knows where we might have wandered looking for the elusive Captain Lew. We decided to lunch there, finding the "Spirit" a spectacle of interest. The young American is almost cradled in a car. We have heard of a child between three and four who already can pick out many various makes by name. The spare tire was almost his teething ring. In the matter of Fords these farmer boys were skilled practitioners; the works under the hood seemed to be tied to-

gether with wire; whenever the car had a paroxysm it appeared to hump its back like a sick dog. The purchase price was probably \$5, or less, since the lowest price for a car guaranteed to run has been recorded at seventy-five cents.

As we sat there, dining on egg sandwiches, the boys were disputing. One of them had evidently been experimenting with the "Spirit." The others were upbraiding him. An old Ford, like a donkey, is best let alone as long as it will go, otherwise it is liable to jib. All through our meal the intermittent explosions and expostulations of the old car persisted. One of the lads came up and asked would I give them a tow round so's to get the engine running proper. Swallowing a last spoonful of ice cream, we harnessed the "Hearse" to the "Spirit" and set off. This last indignity broke the car's resistance. It was by no means ready for the grave as yet. With a spluttering clatter the engine awoke to protest. We drew in the lifeline; the parasites clustered somehow on to the back and, giving a clear proof of the aptness of its christening, the "Spirit of St. Vitus" shuddered away. For a few moments the note of the engine sounded down the road like the buzz of a big cockchafer. We returned to the veranda for coffee.

"The things them boys keep running," said the woman.

The owners of the place were a curious pair. No longer young, they had an air unlike that of any Hot Dog stall keeper we had yet encountered. Usually they are from the farming or immigrant classes, but these were poised; and the man had a face, as Sir Willoughby had a leg; a face, that is, for a Hot Dog heater. Yet I was surprised to hear Jo tell them the reason for our visit to the Ohio. But still more surprised to hear the woman's answer.

"Looking for Captain Lew, are ye? But you're going the wrong way."

"We were told his headquarters are at Point Pleasant."

"Oh, that was years ago. Why Captain Lew is now at Elizabeth on the Monongahela. And he's going there right now. Why it must have been ten days ago that Jim and I met him at Wheeling. That's where he was, and going up. He'll still be somewheres between Wheeling and Pittsburgh at the present time, but he'll go up to Elizabeth and he'll be working the Monongahela till the Fall comes in."

So that, by avoiding the frisky loop of river, we had missed the very man we had come so far to see.

We asked them how they came to know Captain Lew so well.

"Why we were in the Show Boat business ourselves for years," said the woman. "There ain't anything you can tell us about Show Boats. Jim and I we worked the Boats for years, Vaudeville."

"Are there many Boats still running?"

"Oh, quite a few."

"But don't the movies spoil the business?"

"They tie up at the places where the movies aren't," she answered. She looked so very domestic to have been in vaudeville; no stretch of imagination could dress her up in tights, singing a half-indiscreet song or doing the splits. "I guess they do pretty well yet. Why there was one by here not so long ago neither. Going down. That was Captain Hi's, 'River Maiden.' I says so to Jim as soon as ever I heard the calliope. You can't mistake that calliope; it's the oldest on the river. And I says, 'We'll see Metgerstein today.' And sure enough, up he walks. Used to work together a lot we did. Old German he is—oldest calliope player on the river too. Why he's played calliope on the Ohio pretty near for fifty years."

But we could not draw them to talk much of their river life. At the time we wondered why, but later we discovered.

Seen externally, the Show Boat existence may look romantic; but, if so, it is the Romance of Monotony. They were finding a Hot Dog stall far more exciting. First, their hardly saved capital was in the place; secondly, they had a personal contact with the passers-by; and, thirdly, they had chosen a rather lively spot. The woman warned us:

"'Bout half a mile along they've been putting down deep gravel. You look out there for there's a corner. If you come to it pretty fast you'll never make the curve. There was a business man in here last Sunday. I told him, but he slapped into that gravel at about thirty miles an hour, shot over the fence right into the field. Why, sometimes on a Sunday I've seen as many as four or five cars stuck in that place. The farmer says he's tired of putting up the wire, though he makes quite a bit dragging them out. My, but that business man was sore. 'Can't think how I did that,' he said. 'Just as if she wouldn't steer at all.' Nice car it was too, but in he went. Just wouldn't listen."

The problem of Captain Lew was nagging at us. Should we retrace our steps in the hope of catching him at Elizabeth?

We asked their advice.

"You go on to Charleston," said Jim. "There's always a Show Boat somewhere about that place. You ask the wharfkeeper. He'll be sure to know."

With this counsel we determined to keep on. We were reluctant to turn back, for the longer we were at this business of touring, the larger America seemed to be.

With due caution we came to the corner about which we had been warned. We had no wish to try the field, which was visibly scored with traces of former visitors, the hedges being torn and the soil deeply ploughed by the struggles of entrapped cars. We could not reach Point Pleasant before nightfall, and yet, in spite of our vow not to drive at

night we had to push on, as camping grounds there were none. Only chance wanderers come this way.

And even at Point Pleasant itself there was no real camping place. It seemed in the night to be an odd, desultory village, trees and road squared off on a darkened moor, and only here and there a lonely house or store. The grocer's boy advised us to use the ball field. Strangers had camped there before, he said. Following his directions we at once thought ourselves lost. Our lights flattened in the river fog and all we could see in front was a few yards of rutty earth; but we had no feeling that it would lead us anywhere. All else was black. A sudden slope seemed to be drawing us into the pit itself. At the bottom we found a road of deep crevasses filled with mud in which we wallowed like a buffalo. Far away to the right was a main road, with a sharp corner; for the long spears of the car-lights swung, turned, and fled rapidly in front of a row of feeble glimmers which must have been cottage windows. But these seemed very far away with unplumbable darkness between. The road became less muddy; a big tree trunk appeared in the car light. The grocer's boy had mentioned a big tree. Perhaps we had arrived.

I climbed out and with a torch explored the ground. It was fairly flat and firm; we crossed a shallow ditch. As I manœuvred, the lights showed, on the far side of the space, a rickety quarter circle of scaffold like seats. Yes, we had found the ball ground.

As we were setting up our tent underneath the tree, those wheeling searchlights from the main road swept the ground like a scythe; bushes, trees and hollows of darkness between were favoured for a moment and were disdained; for a second they sprang out, vivid spots against the blackness, then disappeared. Us, in turn, those eyes regarded with



bright indifference and passed on. And, when we had the tent erected and had rolled ourselves up, those spasmodic illuminations shone across the canvas and made sleep shy of us.

The morning brought a sorry shrinkage, like revisiting the scenes of childhood. Our moor was only a few acres of scrubby waste; our hill, a mere bank; the distant main road, not very far away; and the cottages, a row of white wooden replicas with unfenced gardens in which old men did gossiping gardening, while women, between chores, swayed their rocking chairs on the shadowy verandas. We had been awakened by the sound of hoofs and of voices. That we had slept in the South was immediately evident; for a high pitched, young and contemptuous voice exclaimed:

"Connecticut licence, eh? Connecticut? Well, they can have all the God darned Connecticut they want for me."

We peered out to see two smart looking boys on good horses passing into the brush. But the nearness of the South had, we thought, been indicated by another symptom, that of an easy geniality. All through the North we had heard so much of this famed Southern hospitality. It is strange, after a bitter war, how much the victors respect the vanquished. To lose is often to gain esteem, to win may be to earn resentment. In the North, the South is a tradition, almost a legend, an enviable inimitable illusion of generosity, dignity, uprightness, tradition—in a word, what they lost from their pockets has been paid back as Romance. We have never heard the South praise the North in a like or in a parallel manner. So from Pittsburgh onwards we had watched the growing easiness of welcome with a feeling that, should this but continue in arithmetical progression, we might find the South itself even embarrassing in its wide open humanity. Not that we would decry the North. Re-

serve is not meanness; though a genial curiosity may make the path easier for the casual stranger, and we can commend it from a purely selfish angle.

Genial curiosity now accosted us in the person of an old, full featured man, carelessly clad, carelessly shaved, with the loose smile of the village good fellow. I would have bet that he was a good map of all the illicit stills for miles round about. He took up his stand with the ease of the practised gossip and, starting with our license plate, conversation ranged the intervening States for a while. After ten minutes of it he sighed and said:

"By gum, if I had an hour to spare I'd stay and talk with you."

He was the arch type of all those old fictional raconteurs of the American legend. He was complete even to the chaw in his cheek. For a while Jo imagined that he had a swollen face, then she began to suspect her powers of observation, as the swelling which she had imagined on the right seemed to be on the left. A jet of brown saliva brought sudden illumination, and she remembered the gradual increase of sundry posters advertising chewing tobacco, which were novelties amongst the standardized commodities of the hoardings. This old fellow was almost incredibly typical. The Bear story is a legend of bucolic America, so much so that it is almost a strain on the laws of probability to find a gossip nowadays to launch a story of this nature. But, as he receded in time along the thread of his reminiscences, the old fellow came sure enough to the yarn of the "bar."

This bar it seems had been a peculiarly objectionable and rather dangerous bar. It had been hunted many a time without success, and three men, vowed to the destruction of the "animile," had taken our old man, then a boy, along with them on the chase. We cannot hope to reproduce his rich and lazy tongued vernacular; but he had lost none of

the zest in many a year of telling. After two days' tramp they had reached the district which this bar most frequented and had camped in the woods for the night. In the early morning the boy awoke first, and, in a boyish mood of bravado, dragged one of the men's rifles with him. He had not gone more than a couple of hundred yards from the tent, inspired doubtless by boyish dreams of glory, when suddenly he found himself face to face with the bar in very person. The image of himself as a Leatherstocking shrank suddenly, became minute and vanished; in fact he confessed that he was too scared either to think or to act. Four lucky factors decided his fate. First, the owner had incautiously loaded his gun; second, the boy had pulled back the hammer; third, in a boyish acting of the scout, he had been carrying the weapon horizontally poised with his finger on the trigger as if waiting for Redskins or whatever should betide; fourth, the convulsive shock of seeing the bar crisped his tendons and he pulled the trigger involuntarily. The recoil of the gun knocked him down as the bar, shot at close range under the heart, sprang at, and in consequence over, him. Missing its object and not understanding the manner of the disappearance, the bar leapt convulsively forwards until, in a last effort, it sprang onto the tent, bringing the whole on the top of the still sleeping and astonished hunters. And while they were trying to find their wits and to struggle from under this terrifying mystery, the bar was in his death throes on their heads.

"The folks wuz mighty glad that there bar wuz dead," said the old gossip reflectively. "But them hunters never did seem to appreciate exactly the way I kinder fixed him."

Point Pleasant was rather bigger than we had anticipated, for it owned a factory, with its squared off factory workers' suburb, and a main street with a post office in modern

Corinthian. Here we could learn nothing of Show Boats and decided to push on to Charleston without delay.

Once again we found unadulterated country, America as it was before the coming of the tarred or concrete road; and yet here, far as we seemed to get from any hint of town, the hand of manufacture hung for, no matter how idyllic the scenery, the soot of soft coal was streaked into the interstices of all the cottages and cabins and even clung in the crevices of the tree trunks. Everywhere we noticed a faintly soiled appearance which is native only to cities. The earth now had become a peculiar red which clings in our memories as the colour of the South; the cabins here and there seemed really poor, clinging by sufferance to the edge of the woods; and on the ends of barns the advertisements of chewing tobacco almost ousted those of any other kind of utility or luxury.

We passed a small store perched high above the road. Jo suddenly cried:

"Oh, what an adorable old man. Jan, we must stop at once."

I clapped on the brakes and then backed. We climbed up the embankment and there, at the door of the wooden shop, was a splendid old character, with snow white mustache and long imperial, serenely unconscious that we were hunting his head as remorselessly as any Dyack. We had to stalk him too. We could hardly dash at him with magisterial flourish of pencil, so we bowed ourselves past him into the store and asked for fizzy pop. Inside was an ordinary country emporium, with sewing cotton, sardines, lamp chimneys, tinware, boiled sweets in jars, Ford tires, implements, ice box, corned beef, dress materials, etc., glimmering through a brownish gloom; a faintly buttery quality dominated, as though the woodwork was once a year cleaned down with a greasy rag. In the middle stood the big pot-

bellied stove of ornate cast iron, natural sterilizer of the chewing habit. The storekeeper himself was long necked and stringy, a dreamy Uncle Sam half hidden behind big spectacles. He served us the lemonade with his knotted hands. His slow, gentle smile seemed cultivated on a rural philosophy developed over the cud of a "chaw"; a ruminative exercise of the jawbone equivalent to the *Om-mane-padne-om* of the Buddhist but at the same time providing convenient ammunition for conversational punctuations. Such a storekeeper is perhaps more liable to think of keeping the store than of the store keeping him, for here the word "hustle" has not yet crept from the dictionary to be a menace to his tranquillity and he could well give rise to the story of the man who discontinued to order a certain commodity, much in demand, because it was "difficult to keep it in stock. Pesters a feller to keep on writing for the darned stuff."

Giving the heat of the day as excuse we carried outside our bottles and sucking straws, (since labour saving and hygiene have abolished the drinking glass from general use) and there we sat on the rocking chairs at the side of our quarry.

"This here," said the philosophic storekeeper, "is my dad. He's eighty-four years old. Fought in the Civil War, he did."

The old man smiled with contented vanity.

"Yes," added the veteran, "I've got four years schoolin' comin' to me from the gov'ment whenever I cares to claim them. I can't read, I can't, nor write neither; but whenever I've a mind to I can go off to school and learn how. Yes, I can. And, by gum, sometimes I think I'll do it; ketch the school bus and claim my four year and have a look at the teacher's face."



He slapped his knees and roared with laughter at his perennial joke.

"Just have a look at teacher's face, ho, ho, ha, ha," he cried.

"And I've got two birth certificates as well," he added with an air of mystery. "Ain't many folks can say as much, eh? Yes. Two. I was born on two different days I was. Cert'fied by gov'ment. Why, I could be eighty-eight if I wanted to. But eighty-four is good enough for me."

"You'll be a hundred yet, Pop," said the storekeeper, patting his father fondly on the shoulder.

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised if I should," said the old man contentedly, "I don't fail none yet."

While I tried to draw from the old man his memories, Jo set herself surreptitiously to draw his face. His eyes were turned inwards upon his thoughts; he looked out over the sunny woods but did not perceive what was happening at his elbow. His souvenirs remained oddly domestic; something had compelled him to go out and fight, Youth, lively blood, a spirit of adventure, but his memories had retained little of all the battles, dangers and hardships he had been through. He had concentrated on those two outstanding peculiarities of his career—that he could claim four years' school and that he had two birth certificates.

He had shown decided character at the beginning; for, dwelling south of the Mason and Dixon line, he had decided to fight for the North, and had to steal away in secret to achieve his purpose. This is how he got his double certificate.

"Cap'n he asks me, 'What's your age?' he says. "Seventeen years old, Cap'n," I says. 'You're a liar,' he says to me sharp, 'you're twenty-one.' 'No, I ain't, Cap'n,' I says, 'I'm just seventeen and a half.' 'When I says you're twenty-one,' he says, 'you *are* twenty-one, and don't you forget it;

an', by God, you was born on the first of April too,' he says. Yes, he makes me born on the first of April too, ha, ha. That's the way I gets two birth certificates guaranteed by the guv'ment too.

"I told my father I got to go," went on the old man, "an' he says, 'If you thinks you got to, why then you better go.' An' ma she gives me half a ham and some pie to put in my bag. There was quite a lot of young fellers round what didn't want to fight for the South. Some got through like I did; some was caught; some was shot, too, and some hid out here in the woods and sneaked in night times to get their food."

But when we tried to press him to other souvenirs he reverted to his due schooling, which the government had promised to all discharged men should they claim it. The grotesque quality of his present position tickled his old fancy. He could picture himself there, with his white beard and his lank knees, squatting on a bench amid all those children; and could imagine the teacher's perplexity.

Charleston was still some way distant, and the philosophic looking storekeeper warned us that there was a long stretch of deep gravel to be passed. We did not then understand the nature of his warning, but learned as soon as we reached the stuff. The nearest likeness I can conjure is that of trying to steer a small boat diagonally across a sharp swell through cross currents. For a dozen miles I fought with the contrariety of that loose gravel. I felt as the amateur rider feels on his first frisky horse. The car refused to answer the reins; half of the time it seemed to be progressing in a crabwise direction; if another car appeared the two were drawn together as if by an irresistible attraction and, in the loose stuff, the steering wheels had little command. A dozen times we escaped collision only by the whim of the fluid stuff beneath us. We rocked and tossed as if in the sea, and all

the while the small pebbles streamed from under our wheels with the sound of rushing waters.

In New York the Automobile Club of America had given us a book of the camp grounds. They had indeed gone somewhat against their own interests in letting us have it; for the Club did not approve of camps or campers. The genial secretary told us that camps in general were not on a hygienic level proper to the country; the Club could not countenance adventures into microbic danger. At the same time, they had given us a copy of their own general publication, which explained more distinctly their disapproval of camps, for the book was, all through, a guide to hotels. In the matter of municipal camps, however, the book had been fairly accurate. So, consulting its pages, we had felt content to arrive rather late at Charleston, since a municipal camp was marked there.

The camp was, however, not easy to find. Local opinion differed as to whether there was really a camp or no; and even those who favoured its existence were hazy. At last a policeman directed us, but when we reached it—a circus had already taken possession. Already the caravans were mustered in a circle; the grand marquee was a sagging and swaying Himalaya, all peaks and valleys; the candy and ice cream stands were displayed and were doing advance business, and half of the rowdier youth of the town, white, tinted and sable, was there sucking cones or batons and full of ribald impudence and curiosity. This seemed hardly the place in which to pitch a tent for a night's rest. But Jo, undaunted, left the car to explore if some spot remained behind the caravans. She came back dubious, and I know well that when Jo is dubious there is good reason for dubiety.

"There is a little corner left, between the caravans and a

stream," she said. "It might be fun, it would certainly be an adventure, but—"

"Is there a further but?" I asked.

"Well," she said slowly, "the Elephant is wandering about helping to put up the tent and things. And I am afraid that recently something hasn't quite agreed with him."

I had not slept well at Point Pleasant; the struggle through the gravel had been nerve wracking. I thought of the circus orchestra blowing brazenly till midnight, I thought of the swarms of inquisitive children, and to these I added the elephant's indisposition. The sum did not add up on the plus side. We had heard rumours that on the other bank of the river was a camping place. So I wheeled the "Hearse" about, and deserted Romance. Bedfellows with an indisposed elephant?

But rumour had directed us not to a camp but to a charity home for slum children. Before the woman in charge could make up her mind to refuse us permission to pitch on the edge of the playground the dusk had darkened to real night. A passer-by suggested that higher up in the ravine we might find a suitable spot; so, once more in the darkness, we turned to explore unknown country for a bed. The road degenerated steadily, and the ravine became narrower. Rocking and stumbling over the ruts on an unmade road, with a purling brook running three feet below on one side, we continued to climb up, in a mood of despair, simply because the road was so narrow. Had it been wider we would have turned back and taken our luck by the side of the suffering elephant. We had long ago counted our informant a habitual liar.

Suddenly in the darkness our headlamps illuminated an arch of flags stretched over the road, and the words "Sylvan Park" written on banners. To what had we come? To a



dead restaurant and dance hall? Workmen in overalls came forward into the glare. "What do you want?" "No, there ain't no camping place here," they said. We saw behind them dimly a procession of cars in file.

"What is it?" cried out a voice of more authority from the rear. Jo went forward to explain our situation. The owner of the voice seemed good natured.

"What's that, what's that?" he said. "Camp, camp? Just one night? Sure it's only for one night? Can't have you here tomorrow; that's the big day. Promise you'll be out by tomorrow, and don't leave any mess. Go up a bit higher, you'll find a more open spot; there's a spring there too, good water. But don't you make a mess. All right."

We thanked him as we passed along the file of cars.

"All right, all right," he said, "but mind you are out tomorrow, see."

We wondered what the function might be that our presence would so disturb.

A little higher the valley began to open, the trees unlocked their branches from overhead, and the last light of dusk showed us a wider valley all spotted with pale objects about the size of lambs dotted about on the distant grass. Here was evidently the level space the man had mentioned and, as I swung the car, our lamps illuminated one of the objects. It was a sign:

WOULDN'T YOUR WIFE BE HAPPY HERE?

I was not sure of the answer. Jo's sense of adventure is so acute that *I* suspected she might have preferred the sick elephant.

We woke up aware that we must not loiter, and, as soon as we had stepped out into the fresh morning air we understood the reason. Sylvan Park was the prey of the realtor. This lovely valley was doomed to become a trans-riverine



suburb of Charleston; sanitation was to spread her concrete tentacles and oust the moles; caged canaries, in well advertised cages, would displace the song of the mocking bird. These groves were to fall and, cheek by jowl, the houses would glare into one another's screened windows; "houses suitable to the landscape," said the Real Estate notices. A gigantic sale was to be staged today. Those forms, pallid in the dusk of last night, revealed themselves as the brothers and sisters of the one which had given us so appropriate a welcome:

DID YOU DREAM OF THIS?  
WHAT IF YOUR HOME STOOD HERE?  
A MAN'S FIRST DUTY? A HOME.  
A WIFE'S SECRET WISH? A HOME.  
YOUR OWN ROOF? HEAVEN ON EARTH.  
HOME: HAPPINESS? HERE.

What a whoop must resound in the Babbittry whenever a new slogan is captured.

But why repine? When Sylvan Park has been peppered with houses of approved architecture, mined with sewers, ridged with roads and tangled with telephone wires, there will still be plenty of lovely, undisturbed ravines in the United States—plenty—many more than one realises.

And Mr. Babbitt on the previous night had been most polite and accommodating. Good luck to his vandalising.

Still in the pursuit of Show Boats, we called on the local paper the next day. The editor greeted us from between his elevated feet and with nonchalance. On getting an idea of our quality, a hint of more respect gleamed from under his green celluloid visor. He did not go so far as to lower his boots from the table, but he set a young reporter on our track.

"These folks seem to have a story; get it," he commanded.

Working under the eye of his editor the young reporter snapped our story from us with the dexterity of a medicine man drawing a tooth. He also advised us where we might get information of Show Boats, either from the wharf man or the Water Board in the Post Office building. The wharf man was a poor creature with no legs; and the loss of his lower half seemed to have soured the upper.

But at the Water Board they were vastly polite. Even here the Show Boat as a Show Boat had no status, it was merely a piece of tugable barge material. But a record of the tugs' movements was kept and amongst the names of the tugs one which habitually pushed a Show Boat was recognised. Thus we pinned our quarry at a stretch of the Kanawha river which lay between the third and fourth locks, near to a place called Cedar Grove.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE CALL OF THE CALLIOPE

THE Show Boat was tied up on the far side of the river. It lay under the shadows of the high, tree-covered bank but the light glowed back upon it as the sun struck hard on the wreathing red surface of the muddy water. The boat seemed undulating and opalescent, as the reflections flowed along its tall sides. We hardly saw that the white paint was stained with exposure and rust, and dingy with grime from the tug's tall chimneys. The fretworked ornament under the balconies was split, and gapped and, as the boat lay there at rest, it looked like a cheap dance hall washed out from a fifth rate provincial Coney Island and set adrift. Down stream, bound in close contact with the Show Boat was the square ended tug, also balconied, with tall, ham-frilled funnels sticking out of its flat roof. At the stern the great red paddle wheel lay on the water like a gigantic blossom.

Gilt letters, faded yet still retaining a gleam, told us that

this was the "Floating Palace Theatre River Maid," as had also the posters stuck up in the small villages through which we had passed; modest little posters, lurking in places not reserved for commercial use, sides of barns, telegraph poles, and the like.

In lowest gear we steadied the old car down a very slippery slope which led to the water, across which a small scow ferried us; its gasoline paddle launch making as much noise as a Chicago gun duel. We managed to clamber up the opposite slope but, in a last gasp, our enfeebled old engine straddled us across a railway line and stalled.

"Ya better get outa that," said a red face, thrusting itself through the window. "There's a train along pretty soon now and a lady got herself killed just that way only about two months ago right here."

The station master said that there was a piece of land about three fields down where we could set up a tent, where good water was laid on for the animals.

"I'll tell the owner when you're fixed," he added, "but don't you go letting the mules out."

From a distance the four mules watched us roll the lump of a car across the uneven grass; with their heads at various angles of curiosity they saw the tent take shape. Then, in celebration of this unusual event, they bit one another, squealed and went galloping and cavorting round the field. We closed the car and tent and set off to make acquaintance with the aquatic actors.

Doubtless the captain knew his river well, but to us he seemed moored in a most unpromising spot. A railway station, a coal tip straddling the line, a few grimy cottages and one large house comprised all the village here; the opposite side of the river seemed little more prosperous. But did we but cast eyes up and down the steep hills of the valley, we could see that the woods were scored with straight lanes

from top to bottom; lanes which were in reality truck lines and ended in coal tips, like the one here across the railway. All these belonged to small mines, for this valley owned a wealth of coal. Odd mines, upside down mines, indeed, with galleries driven into the hillsides far above and the mine heads underneath.

From a muddy bank set with stepping stones a narrow gang-plank led to the flat bow of the Show Boat. Four actors, somnolent in the afternoon heat watched us approach with listless eyes. Listlessly they passed us on to the captain's office. The heat had sapped their energy; besides, they were the actors, the business of the Show Boat was not theirs. But one young man in shirt sleeves, his hat cocked over a half cynical eye, went indolently before us to the Captain's quarters. The Captain, swaying slowly in his rocking chair, turned the letter of introduction over several times, considering the envelope.

"I am not Cap'n Lew that this letter's addressed to," he explained.

We explained in turn how we had missed Captain Lew on the upper Ohio. The young man in the straw hat seemed favourable towards us. He suggested that Captain Hi should open the letter. At last the little captain put a slow finger under the flap. The weather seemed so hot to have to make up one's mind; he rocked steadily as though developing an idea like a photographic plate. At long last he said:

"Wall, I don't see no harm can come of it. 'Ll you show them round, Tom?"

Tom was charmed and charming. He even contrived to remember the Mr. O—— who had given us the letter; had worked with him one season on Captain Lew's boat. As we went into the big dim theatre Tom explained his origin. His glory, like that of the Show Boat, was in the past. Once



that curtain had been bright with fresh art, once that proscenium glittered with gold, once local gentry in tall hats and crinolines had graced those stage boxes and a hundred oil lamps had lit the stage. Now all had been allowed to fade with the audiences, dim dinginess only alleviated by the superior glamour of the electric lighting.

And Tom. He came from old estates, hereditary heir of rich English acres now in the possession of a usurping British peer. A dastardly government and sequestration had played a part in this drama of the past; illusion and glamour did what it might to gild the present. Yet, may it not be better for the soul to remain the hopeful claimant of an unattainable fortune than actually to win possession? In real life Tom played the part of the lover on Keats' Grecian Urn. It dyed the hue of all his long lazy days. When he played the aristocratic villain on the stage, his preëminent part, he but cast himself where he should be of rights, making illusion more real to himself than was reality.

Life on the Show Boat hardly moved as rapidly as did the slow, muddy river coiling by the stern wheel. It was a serene Southern domestic life, untinged within by the actors' traditional passions, though we did see two of the engineer's lads trying to date up with two smirking village girls who loitered at the water's edge, half tempted by this bold novelty from the outer world, half aware that indiscretions are unredeemable unless indulged in at home.

At one end of the great hollow theatre in the boat was the box office and over it the captain's cabins; at the other end were the stage and the green room, over which lived the married actors. They carried no waste material aboard. Little Captain Hi was owner, manager, impresario, stage director, box office clerk, accountant; his wife was housekeeper, storekeeper and general Mrs. Grundy; the married actors played counter to their wives. The bachelors, engine room staff,

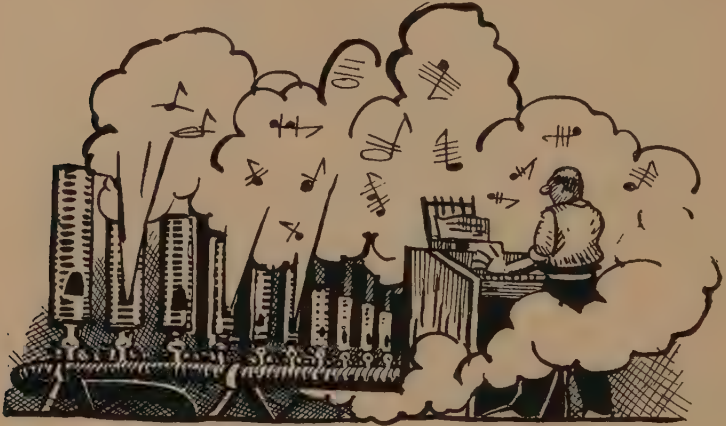
musicians and pilot lived on the tug, cabined round the dining room under the calliope. A Show Boat actor was worth \$5 a day with keep; say \$7 altogether, so that he earned about half what a clever bricklayer might in a northern city or in one of Mr. Ford's factories. Art still exercises her old glamour, since one of the actors had been a paper-hanger, a Vincent Crummles who did not aspire to Shakespeare, but who spent all his spare cash on golf whenever the boat tied up at a town where a public golf links was.

Yet who will not say that they are sufficiently well paid for their pains, barnstorming in lassitude, a house boat's idleness with but a few hours of effort each evening? None of the scurry of train travelling, no packing, no lodgings to seek, no landladies, no pale seducers lingering at the stage door entrance, no rehearsals, since one play satisfies a thousand miles of audiences.

At five o'clock the calliope sounded its warning call. The musician was an old, old German, small in frame to command so boisterous an instrument, blasting out his melody with forty pounds of steam pressure. Yet the instrument was older than the player. It was fixed to the upper deck of the tug just abaft of the wheel house and in its silent moments was by no means idle since its long connecting pipes distilled the drinking water for the Boat. Two rows of steam whistles were ranged in size, like the photographs of French Canadian families, whose women breed twenty-five apiece, not counting twins. The keyboard of this musical engine was housed in a box of oak like a church harmonium, with small brazen keys, perhaps symbolical, capable at least of reaching to God's high seat if any music could. Heavens, what a riot! At the first shrill shriek the ship's dog leapt out of its summer slumber, howled in agony and sprang into the lap of the nearest friend, imploring with

goggling eyes that its ears be covered tight till this horror of sound was over.

Whooping and wailing the whistles shocked the air waves into a shudder which rolled ten miles across the country. The little man stood, his ears packed tight with cotton wool, evoking all this din from dim pencil scripts which had served him for many years; when he pressed a chord the steam



THE CALLIOPE PLAYER

swallowed him wholly from view and made music smell like washing day. Odd music it was too. The calliope had been built before the Civil War; it had called crinolined ladies to the play. The scale had been made to suit a simpler age; no sharps or flats interrupted its progressions, it was modal. But when modern tunes had to be fitted as best they might, the result was more interesting than satisfactory, so that such tried old favourites as "Old Black Joe" or the "Swanee River," came out almost like new inventions.

"Listen to that old idiot," drawled somebody. "He's playing 'Marching through Georgia.'" Doesn't he know yet that it isn't a tune you can play south of Marietta? If he played

that twenty miles down the river they would storm the boat and lynch him."

"But he's a fair wonder," said the lanky fiddler, "a fair wonder. On the piano he'll play any key and follow you even if he's only heard the tune once."

The fiddler was as long as the calliope player was short. He figured, too, on those modest notices lurking on telegraph poles, and he offered \$5 to anybody who could outplay him in old country tunes. He was the drooping mustached countryman personified. Our tales of the Swedish Master-fiddler disturbed him. Could it be that the Swede was a better player than he? He had his vanity; for, when Jo had sketched the actors and the crew, he alone did not want a copy of his portrait. He would not like his wife to see it because, although Jo had flattered him and had smoothed ten years from his puckers, he did not find it young enough. We promised to judge between him and the Swede, but we knew that, whatever our private opinion, our hearts would not dare to wound his self esteem.

Hearing of our Spanish music, the company suggested that we might put on a turn for fun, to which we readily consented. So, as soon as the calliope had finished its horrid vespers, we clambered once more up the steep banks to the tent for supper and to change into more suitable clothes.

In the blue Ohio night the Show Boat glowed like a fairy thing. Lit by festoons of colored bulbs, under the fretted balconies, it showed no longer the soiling of exposure and of age. The village girls who clustered, squeaking, on the stepping stones or on the gangplank, and the lads who held them from slipping and took advantage to tickle them, were not quite in harmony with the romance of the old boat. Bustles or even leg-o'-mutton sleeves would have been better. Yet, this audience, for all the cinema, was probably as innocent as that old one. Much alien blood imported here for



the mines has mingled with poor white stock, though here the Negroes' gallery would be empty. As the folk clustered on the broad bow in front of the box office, the spluttering ferry brought other loads from the further bank.

This ferry took an impertinent part in the play; it interrupted the actors at incongruous moments; the most passionate love episode was played to a regular fusillade, and the last shot which told of heroic justice overtaking the villain was wholly drowned by its chattering nonsense, as though the execution had been performed by a machine gun gang. The play was one worn thin by long use—the bashful hayseed and the superstitious widow, the comic but honest farm hand and the commonsense milkmaid, the secretly ambitious young husband and the discontented wife, the sneering villain and the implacable victim of a past passing lust. Jumble the characters together, toss them in a hat, and the play comes out the same, with three sets of embraces as the curtain falls. In private life the bashful hayseed had been ringed by the superstitious widow, the comic farm hand by the sensible milkmaid, so that two sets of the kisses were pre-eminently chaste, except in Kansas where you may not embrace even your wife in public. The Show Boat stage is not yet so advanced as the average American flapper at a dance.

The audience was not yet tired of this simple entertainment. From a box we could see the ranks of enthralled spectators, mustered in deep breathing rows, the young men clutching the girls in the cover of a deluding half light. A set of four young miners had hired the box opposite; they had been drinking pot still whisky and were noisy. One tried to clutch the pretty ingénue as she came to that side of the stage, but, missing his hold, he began to climb out onto the stage after her. His companions dragged him back,



but we could see through the wings the engineer's assistant, a brawny lad, move into position in case of further trouble.

While the scenery was being changed the actors gave variety turns before the curtain, and in one of the intervals we ourselves played music gathered from gypsy caves in Spain. The fiddler sawed off old country airs and invited opponents. But no one offered himself. After the final drop the evening was concluded by a fatherly conjurer who had the voice of an urbane dentist assuring a very nervous patient that the tooth would not hurt at all.

The Captain was satisfied with his receipts. Higher up the river he had run into an epidemic of infantile paralysis which had kept people away from fear of possible contagion. The Show Boat had been playing to meagre houses.

We said our good nights and climbed to bed. The mules had retired to a corner of the field, but the long trains of coal wagons thundered by, shrieking warnings and belching out long clouds of smoke so thick that in the still air of the previous afternoon it had clung together like a canopy over the railroad, settling down with the dew till all the country side smelt of soot and was grimy to the touch.

We slept intermittently.

A long scream from the whistle awoke us before sunrise. From the high bank we could watch the movements of the tug's crew as they bound the boats together; for on these rivers the tugs do not tow, but push, and the two must be chained into a coherent whole; this applies as much to several barges as to a single one. In the ornamental kiosk protuberant on the Show Boat's flat roof, we could see the old pilot spin the six foot steering wheel; the warps were cast, the long connecting rods of the stern engine thrust slowly but remorselessly at the outside cranks, the great red paddles flogged the water and caught it up in ruddy cata-

racts. The Show Boat with its cargo of sleeping actors stemmed the river, slewed a big circle and, with volumes of that thick soft coal smoke curling from its high, ham-frilled funnels, sailed majestically down the muddy current. It was moved thus early to avoid the winds, which are always liable to blow up after the sun rises. Nothing afloat can quite equal the dignity of the tall, stern-wheel steamer; queen amongst boats with its long train of foam.

We took a riverside road to rejoin our Show Boat. As we maneuvered over the tortuous path we heard a long way before us the calliope's matins proclaiming its arrival some eight miles ahead. It had found anchorage at the foot of a long ladder to which boats were moored. At the top, on the edge of the clay cliff, stood a cottage, over the railings of which a grotesque man with bare feet watched us set our tent on a small space of grass beside the river path. From inside the cottage, an old woman shouted abuse at him for standing about looking so dirty. He spat, grinned at us and offered a sledge hammer for driving the tent pegs.

Our performance of the last night had so far won approval that we had been invited to lunch; and, during the warm day, we stayed on the boat, lounging, chatting, sketching and exchanging yarns, Canterbury tales of America.

Amongst the actors few would admit their presence on the Show Boat without excuse. Perhaps they thought that we would be contemptuous of them; we, who are contemptuous of nobody except the self-satisfied rich! Only Tom, the American Claimant, dared stand on his merits, and was he not fortified by the dignity of illustrious rank? Filial piety accounted for the presence of the Comic Farm Hand and wife. A mother's silver wedding would cut the winter season from which a circuit actor could not take a month's leave; so, for winter's vacation, summer's earnings must suffice.

The dramatic paper hanger (or the Bashful Hayseed) had broken his arm the previous winter, and with it his contract; he too had to seek a summer occupation. The conjurer had revolted against the clique of agents who were, he said, making conjurers' lives a real misery. "It's this way with me," said the juvenile lead, "I don't want to go on being an actor. I want to become a pilot; but to be a pilot a fellow has to have lots of river experience. There are stiff examinations, and besides he has to get his weight up. I'm not heavy enough yet. That big wheel takes a lot of managing, especially in bad weather."

The little Ingénue, pretty, with her bob of black hair and her big black eyes, was a true daughter of the river. Her parents kept a junk boat which was now moored a little way higher up. They had known Captain Hi during many a year, and all the stage she had seen was that of the Show Boat. But she wasn't stage struck.

"I don't know that I want to be an actress, really," she said. "When Miss Gloria took the boat, to do her film on, she wanted me to go with her and take a part in the movies. But I don't know. Anyway, I said I wanted to finish my schooling first and perhaps go to college. Every year I think I won't act any more. But then you know after the long dull winter—why, in the spring, when I hear the sound of the calliope, I have just got to go—"

The pathetic Victim was the poorest actor of the crowd but he compensated for that by being kitchen superintendent, neither of which was his proper job. He confided in us that he was on the Show Boat because of his "bar".

Are clowns born or made? At any rate never had a man a more suitable face than Bunty. Not that he was comically ugly, but he had just that slight elongation of nose, just those protuberant cheeks, just that narrow-eyed, quizzical glance, that make a perfect background for the clown's paint.

"This yer bar of mine was sick," said Bunty, "So I gotta put him where he can be looked after; feller I know; kinda sanitarium as you may say. And while he's being looked after, I gotta work to get his keep instead of him working to get mine. That's why I'm here.

"He's a wrestling bar," said Bunty with an affectionate note in his voice, "Wrestles and boxes, he does. If you see



THE PUSH-TUG

'Bunty and his Bar' writ up, that's me. I offers \$5 to anybody what can put that there bar on his back. I can do it easy. I shows 'em. An' up they comes, swelling their muscles. He's only a snip of a chap, folks says, lookin' at me. But that bar floors them. Whop! Ya see, it ain't wrestlin' what gets that bar down; why, gosh, he weighs more'n three hundred pounds. Thing is he's ticklish; get your finger in his ribs that does it. Down he goes. But they don't know the trick of it."



"And boxes. I'd like to match him with Gene Tunney, ony Gene wouldn't have a chance. He did that to me one day. Kinda what you might call a foul—eh?"

He pulled up his sleeve and showed us some ugly scars on his forearm.

"He don't box ugly as a rule, my bar don't," said Bunty. "We just whop round at each other. I got a boy with a bell; when he rings it that bar just runs back to his stool. He knows. The day I got this the old bar was fighting much as usual but he flips me one across the ear that stung. And I got mad and smacks him back one on the nose. And he lets out a harder one which pretty near knocks me across the stage. You know you can't let your bar get the best of you, couldn't work him else. So I gets both my fists and I bangs him two good uns right on the point of the nose just where bars like it least. 'Oh, Boy, that'll fix you', I thinks. But he kinda shakes his head dizzy and stupid for a second and then he comes back at me roaring with his mouth open. I never muzzles him. And that fool boy standing there with his mouth open too. I felt scared I tell you, but I gotta face him. So I jabs my glove into his mouth. 'Bite that,' I says; but he slipped up and grabbed me by the forearm. Lucky he'd got gloves on too or he'd a tore all the skin off my ribs. They was sore for two weeks afterwards. And then at last that fool boy rings the bell. And I'm blest if that there bar didn't let go like a sport and run back to his seat. Ya, he's trained all right. I wouldn't sell him for a thousand dollars. He didn't mean nothin' bad, just got wild. But I tells ya if he flips me one now I just take it. Yes, sir.

"A grand wouldn't buy him," said Bunty, "but, believe me, I got him for nothing. Not one dime. He was pretty sick. On Pekoe's Circuit we was, him and me. 'Shoot that bar,' says the animal boss, 'he can't get no better.'



'You give him to me,' I says, 'lemme see what I can do with him.' 'You can take him and keep him,' says the boss, 'but you's wasting your time. Why, even his skin is so mangy it ain't worth a nickel.' But I look after him proper. He was pretty sick, but I buys good food and I pays a doctor for him and I gets him medicines. And do you know, pretty soon he begins to look fine again. And then they wants to take him back again. So I goes to the head boss and I puts the thing to him fair. If it wasn't for me that bar was a fair stiff, wasn't he? And I spent my time and money on him, didn't I, thinking he was mine? Was I going to spend all that trouble for a company's bar? I says; why she was given to me. 'He hadn't no right to give it,' says the boss. 'Well if it wasn't for me right now there wouldn't be no bar to talk about,' says I, 'so forget he exists anyway.' At last he says: 'You been training him too I hear.' 'Yes, I has,' I says. 'Then look here, Bunty,' he says, 'you stay with us the rest of the season, and you work that bar for us without any pay, and at the end you can take him. That is how he puts it. And I tell you when I took that bar away they were real mad. He was a good bar. Yes, they was as mad as coons to see him go.'

The things that novelists or journalists write about the Show Boat people rarely please the originals. They have to be made to look romantic, often at the expense of verisimilitude. One article said that the actors were the boatmen and bottle washers in the daytime, which annoyed them very much. Even Miss Ferber's novel was held to do the profession an injustice. Perhaps it was a little condescending. As a matter of fact these communities are very respectable and even sedate. They live in such close contact that a code of manners is needed to insure coherence. There is little room for drama on a Show Boat and, in real life, the

passions of people who have to work for a living are much more under control than the novelists are willing to admit. Even the little ingénue, who, with her beauty, might have been expected to exhibit all the drawbacks supposed to be rampant in modern American maidenhood, combined with the stage and with a feeling of stultified ambition, was placidly contented under the rather strict chaperonage of Mrs. Hi. The wanderings of the Boat were adventure enough for her.

"Why, we go to the wildest places," she exclaimed opening her big black eyes at us, "to the wildest places, right outside of civilisation. Can you believe me when I tell you that we stop at some spots where they haven't even ice cream?"

One has to live in America to realise just how savage a divorce from ice cream implies. Where ice cream dies out, the blood feud begins.

"Isn't this like a dream?" said Jo, looking out over the broad river up which a block of coal barges was being thrust by a high white tug. "Like Ole Luck Oie who set the little girl's feet to the edge of the picture so that she could walk in. I'm always feeling here as though I had stepped into a moving picture. Suddenly everything will click down and I'll find myself in Europe again."

That night we varied our programme. Jo made lightning portraits of the actors while I played the guitar as accompaniment. Our applause was so great that then Captain Hi made us a tentative proposition. But so much more of America called; and we could not linger.

All that afternoon the fiddler had been very delighted; a challenger had appeared, a little wizened old fellow carrying his fiddle in a cloth bag. Metgerstein, the calliope player, had been trying out his pieces, fitting a piano accompaniment to them. But after the professional fiddler had mounted the

stage and had played a piece or two, the challenger was nowhere to be found. A combination of stage fright and conviction that the fiddler was the better man had made him hurriedly pack up his violin and vanish.

After the performance we clambered up the long ladder to our tent. At the cottage fence the old woman was waiting for us.

"We've got a spare room in our house," she said. "It seems a real shame that you should have to sleep in that tent. Why not take our bedroom? We'd feel honoured."

The invitation surprised us, for up to now she had not shown us any courtesy. We protested that we preferred the tent to bedrooms; but she was so urgent that we had the greatest difficulty in convincing her. "So this is Southern hospitality," we thought. "It may become almost a nuisance."

But on the next morning, as we were packing up, the bare-foot man let the secret escape.

"There was a piece about you-all in the paper yesterday," he said. "D'jer see it?"

And he showed us a copy of the Charleston reporter's work, a clever note:

"Only the cold ashes of a camp-fire marked the spot in Sylvan Park where Mr. and Mrs. Gordon, of London, England, camped upon Thursday night. . . .

"Far up in the hollow, in a tiny ravine shielded by overhanging trees, lay the ashes, the only evidence that there on the previous night two authors of world-wide fame had pitched their tent. . . . The spring was unsullied and the glen in which they had camped was marked only by the ashes of their fire. . . .

"Where they went, when they left the camp site, is un-

known; for none saw them leave, and in fact but few persons knew that the camp was other than the over-night halting place of automobile tourists. . . .

"But it was more, much more for it was . . . etc., etc. . . .

"So they folded their tents like Arabs,  
And as silently slipped away."

The next day, Sunday, we turned back up stream to visit the ingenue's home, the Junk Boat, which lay near the spot where we had first crossed the river. Here it was engaged in salvage work. These placid rivers can be angry in their moments. Tornadoes or even lesser storms will blast them into sharp but dangerous seas. As we lay at anchorage the old pilot had pointed out the ribs of a barge which projected from the water.

"See that?" he said. "I sunk her."

"Did you indeed?" I answered, astonished that he took this evidence of his incompetence so calmly.

"No," he replied, "I sunk her."

"That's what I thought you said," I answered. "How did you come to do it?"

"No," he insisted, "I sunk her. Not I, but Ice."

As we were seeking the best spot where we might descend the steep bank to the Junk Boat's moorings, a young man with a baker's van drove up.

"Leave the car here," he said, "and walk down on foot."

"You know where we are going?" we asked.

"My sister told me you were coming," he said.

In his day he had been a Show Boat actor.

"But there's nothing in it," he said, "I just went on till I'd saved enough to buy this bakery business and then I

quit. It's no kind of a life, that. Though they did say I was pretty good too; Captain Hi he wanted me back."

Art, as Stevenson says, is not playing on the piano or painting pictures; it is a life which has to be lived.

The Junk Boat was a long barge on which a one story cabin had been set. Half of it was a crockery and utility store; the other half a living house. The stern was a big veranda where the baker's baby slumbered at the water's edge. A small gasoline launch was moored alongside and constituted all the haulage expenses. Up and down the long rivers they drifted, selling their utilities for cash or for barter, gradually filling the hull beneath with junk which could be sold at the bigger centres—metal scrap or old rubber or such things. With the profits of their gleaning they bought more crockery.

Here the Junk Boat was engaged in salvage work. Under the keel lay the wreck of its predecessor. It had just been fully loaded and was about to drop down stream to the market, when one night a terrific storm had burst on the river. In the darkness the terrified family had managed to gain the river bank over the kicking gangplank. By the flare of the lightning they had seen the gasoline launch torn away and swept down stream. At that moment the father realised that his overcoat was on board. In spite of the terror of his children he insisted on going back to get it. He crossed over the plank but no sooner had he penetrated into the house than the plank was washed away. The high waves were rolling into the heavily laden barge and every moment it sank deeper and deeper into the water. At last the father reappeared. He had the overcoat, but his escape was cut off. At the risk of her life the daughter managed to catch the rope which he threw and, as the barge sank under his feet, he was drawn half drowned to safety.

You would hardly believe this slow, muddy river capable



of such violence. We sat there on the balcony listening to the mother tell the tale while the baker's wife rocked her baby. There is an odd effect in being born so close to the water. A child from a barge can never have the same precise outlook as one born on land. The river exerts a glamour.

The mother had always cherished the idea that she wanted a farm. As soon as they gained enough money she had dreamed of moving onto the dry ground and staying there; firm land underfoot. At last, the necessary sum realised, she had bought the coveted farm, only to find it a deep disappointment.

"Three months," she said, "three months was enough for me. I'm cured. 'Let's get back to the river,' I says to Jim. Here we are and here we'll stay. The fuss there is living on land! When I go back to the land it's when I go permanent."

She was secretly terrified of her daughter's talent. She asked for her no world rousing success; the applause of the multitude would have been no compensation. She desired for her daughter no higher fate than that which had befallen herself. She rejoiced that her young blood was not stirred by the call of the stage. She hated the call of the calliope every spring. It was drawing her daughter away from her; tempting her to a different life, to a life of cities, of strange half understood temptations. . . .

On the bank lay the muddy objects which they had so far managed to fish from the wreck. As we passed them to regain our car we thought that Europeans would hold this unambitious family to be very un-American. Content with small and settled things, not reaching out with their undoubted talents to the great glaring places of the Earth but satisfied that their lives should drift on in slow, wreathing progression like the easy, muddy river which had seen them born.

We had made a morning call on the Junk Boat and now, returning to Charleston, overtook the ex-paperhanger and his wife walking on the road. We picked them up and carried them into town. It is really unfair to liken him to Mr. Vincent Crummles, for no theatrical bombast marred his native gentility and, in his wide white plus fours, he looked quite fit to merit that title of Southern respect which has degenerated from "Cunnel" to "Capt'n." They were a handsome pair; he already turning grey, she still in the late twenties. She had been, so we learned, a college graduate and, at the time that he swept her away, had been editor, chief reporter, sales manager, advertising agent and chief typesetter of a very country newspaper. We wondered what their fate would be. How much were they the prey of fears for the future, or did they live in a resolute present? Were they perhaps watching the riverine prospects as they moved from place to place looking for a spot on which to set a Hot Doggery, as had those other actors by Tupper's Plains? We dared not ask. They seemed to walk so gaily, facing fate.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE EDGE OF THE SOUTH

At Cattlesburgh we took a promising short cut, over a mountain. Half way along, the rain began to fall. They had been "improving" here. Great diggers had ruined the road, pro tem, to such an extent that, trying to slew round a narrow spot choked with mud, we fell from Scylla into Charybdis and stuck in a sand pile. Our back wheels buzzed in the slime but would not budge us a foot, so we had the alternative of staying there till somebody should arrive or of digging ourselves out through the sand pile with our bare hands.

We chose the more energetic alternative. But just as we were coming to the conclusion that a damp and misty camp would be preferable another car showed up round the corner. It held a bloated sprawling man and a thin faced mechanic. With a jerk the driver stopped his car. The

bloated man leaned across him and spoke in thickened accents.

"Wazzer matter; blocking the road?"

"Got stuck," we said cheerfully.

"Kan'cher pull out?"

"Doesn't look like it."

He clambered elaborately out of his car, with a half drunken gesture.

"An' we can't gey by," he said. "Hell, this is a fix!"

"Got to pull 'em out, Doc," said the driver. "S'orl right. We'll get through."

The mechanic pursed his lips over the rope from our tent. While he was attaching it, the other, with the expansiveness of the drunkard, began to talk.

"See," he said, "I gotta get out. Dam those officers— It 'ud a been all right if I hadn't had the guns. Course they'd a fixed me for the car full of whiskey, but the guns is the trouble—Oh, hell—"

"Don't you flap your mouth so much, Doc," said the driver. "S'orl right I tell you. We'll get through."

"To hell with them cops," cried the bloated man. "Been laying for me they has."

"Aw, shut your face," said the driver gruffly. "Here, mister, you hop in and start her up."

Slowly he dragged us through the sand pile till once more we stood on the road. Doc lumbered into his seat and as the driver let in the clutch we heard him say:

"You keep your trap shut, Doc, an' don't worry, we got time yet, I'll get you through."

To have questioned further would have been clearly indelicate; and, considering the deserted place, not only indelicate but perhaps dangerous. At any rate we preferred speculation over the mysterious matter rather than cer-

tainty. And now we began to wonder if the two-gun Doctor had done us a real service in pulling us from the sand pile. We had no skid chains and our back tires were old; the road was as slippery as a greasy pole; the hill was steep and the curves sharp. We dared not brake the car too much as it threatened to become a toboggan and, in such a mood, tended to turn back to front. In fact an injudicious use of the brake made her go not slower but faster. At intervals Jo exclaimed:

"Jan, was that a skid?"

"Well," I replied, as some lucky rut stopped the car from going hinder end first over the cliff, "not a real skid. Just the modest slips of the road. Why, in a *real* skid the car may turn round twice on itself."

From Pittsburgh the country had been growing progressively poorer. Ramshackle cabins, half harboured in the woods, and soiled, dingy, yellowish villages lined the roadside as if begging for alms. We drove on seeking a place in which to camp but, with a hill on one side and misty river flats on the other, we could espy no lodgement till, at the dim end of dusk, we came to a flatter spot and a poor looking store which advertised coffee. Here we stopped to ask.

A rough girl, her hair jagged into a bob, answered us.

"Why the Gypsies fix themselves in a wood about a couple of hundred yards along," she answered.

The store had a table, as though it served refreshments, but it looked so poor a place that we doubted whether they could provide anything. A dim oil lamp gave all the light there was, and even in this thin light the place was clearly filthy; three quarters of the way down the room an old, tattered American flag was hung as a curtain and against it was heaped a mound of corn cobs. Greasy neglect was the



note of the place, with which the inhabitants harmonised, the women with ill tended hair, the men with ragged felt hats which had worn to a queer beauty of line.

We were famishing, but all we could get to eat was an aged tin of sardines and some bread. Coffee they consented to make for us. As we ate, rough looking men sauntered in, examined us with mute suspicion, passed behind the curtain, and so into an inner room. A boy of twenty came in, tipped himself back in a chair and began to boast of how recently he had been arrested for possessing liquor. Suddenly the rough girl showed an unexpected side of her character.

"You ain't like ornery folks," she said. "Now folks thinks I'm just about crazy, but I likes folks what's different. Say, I go out and talks a lot with them Gypsies. I learned quite a bit of their words too. I wants to see different things, I do—"

Her mother called her into the inner room. She came back no more. Perhaps they were suspicious of too much intimacy; suspicion seemed to hang thick as the paraffin fumes from the smoky lamp.

All next day we rode through the famous Blue Grass region of Kentucky. Then we turned south onto the Dixie Highway. To our right were the Cumberland Mountains, where for sure we could find savage land enough without even the civilising influence of ice cream, but we were content with the average romance of America. It was enough to have to slew the heavy old "Hearse" over the curves and climbs of the Cumberland Gap, and by the time we got down to Knoxville I was ready for a rest. So we welcomed the first camping ground that we saw, a level space clipped in between the road and a stream. Three or four encampments were already there; one was an Englishman, a com-

mercial traveller who had fitted up his car so that he could sleep inside; one was of a family group setting out to Florida; one was a gypsyish pair of huddled lean-tos attached to an eviscerated Ford; the last was an old green box on wheels, on the step of which sat an old, old man. He watched us put up our tent and then strolled towards us. He had long white hair and a plentiful beard, an old Whitmanish breed. His watch chain, stretched across a shabby waistcoat, could have controlled a mastiff, and a battered old cap was placed on his venerable hair.

Coming through the mountains we had passed a tragedy of the road. At the foot of a high embankment lay a car, twisted and bottom up, which in falling had spilled out its contents; burst boxes displayed tangled linen; clothes and bedding were strewn about and in the midst a sewing machine held up its legs in the air like a clever child. A group of men on the bank sat and stared down at the wreck, chewing tobacco in a ruminating fashion and answering in turn the common question:

"Anybody hurt?"

"Woman got cut about some, nothing dangerous."

"Preacher," said a lean old mustached mountaineer to Jo, "turned over twice, he did. Yes, preacher he was, going to preach at some other place. Driving at night, went to sleep at the wheel. Yes, he did, shot clear over the bank. Lucky they aint both of em daid. Cut some about the laigs she was."

Night driving. The hallucination of getting there. No uncommon kind of accident, this; the mystery being that it is not commoner. They drive themselves stupid, drive themselves sick, drive on with a friend prodding them in the ribs to keep them awake; they boast of their somnolence in camp grounds and at Hot Doggeries, places where motorists meet.

We described this scene to the old Man of the Green Box.

"Don't tell me nothing about going over banks," he ejaculated, sucking an old briar pipe and allowing the smoke to filter through his stained mustache, "I have just come out of hospital I have. It were a bumble-bee with me. Yes, it were; got into my driving box there. And on my word, gentleman, as I was trying to get him out— Well, there I was, and next thing I knew the car was atop of me and my dog was licking my face."

"They must have heard about you in *The New Yorker*," I said, "there it was written, 'If a bumble-bee gets under your windshield, stop the car before a telegraph pole stops it.'"

"It were a bank," said our old Whitman seriously, "not a pole. But it were a bumble-bee sure enough. Durn it. Some kind people come along later. They gets me out; carries me to hospital in their own car; and when I gets out I finds that they had paid not only for my hospital but for getting my old car out and fixing it as well. Miraculous, the doctor said I was, healing up like I did at my age. And not a dime to pay, gentleman. Fine people. Never see me before.

"You know," he went on, "I bin thinking some about that there bee. I suppose it might ha' bin a nachural bee. Stop the car fust—like it says in that there paper. Yes. But then again, I ponders that bee and I ain't so sure. Once I got into a quarrel with a Indian witch doctor. Nasty feller he could be, if he had anything against you. And I kinda figgered out that that there bee might a bin sent special by that doctor there. You never ain't sure what them fellers *can* do. But of course it might a bin a nachural bee; but then it mightn't—"

We believe the bee story to be true, though the old fellow proved to be the most barefaced liar we have ever encountered. A little later he was saying:

"No, as I came down I didn't call in to see my friend Edison. Fine cracks we used to have in the old days, but now he ain't no fun. Ya see he's so deaf you can't talk with him—"

He was one of the honorable profession of Hobo, begging his way to "Floridy." What he would do when he arrived there we could not imagine. He claimed to be an auctioneer; but who would trust him with anything to auction? No, at eighty years of age or so, he was still burning the road, waving his white hairs for pity and for gasoline. His truth would have been worth a hundred times his fictions, but truth and he seemed to be habitual enemies. A victim of his own vanity he could gain a sufficient complacency only by listening to his own lies and trying to think them truth.

The owners of the gypsy-like encampment were two fugitives from the Mississippi floods. Amazingly dirty fellows they seemed stained permanently with engine grease. They were reconstructing the eviscerated Ford, having bought an engine for four dollars, from a wreck. Nothing can daunt a certain type of Ford owner. They had been entrapped on the wrong side of the river and had to make a detour of a few thousand miles to reach their home, but a few hundreds distant. One of the men described to me how he had to pass under a levee which was threatening to break. He was in fact the last man through, and the stream of water was already axle high across the road. But he had little of that narrative power which is a not uncommon gift amongst these simple people.

In the end the old Hobo talked us out. He was as incorrigible a gossip as he was a liar and the combination bored. So we moved to another camp run by the Lions' Club where ample accommodation included a gas kitchen and shower baths. Nearby was a large county fair, similar in character

to that in Pennsylvania, except that in the community section were a number of the most fascinating patchwork quilts which gave us a shock of surprise, so finely designed, so beautiful were they. Many dated from long back, some were comparatively modern, but the richness and satisfaction of the designs amply contradicted the idea that America had no folk arts. This quilt designing is worthy of a considerable study.

At the new camp we met another kind of migrant citizen. Here was the family of a young electrician bound for California, a mere three thousand miles of house moving. The doctor had said that the grandmother needed a softer climate, so the young man bought an extra car, packed his family in, grandparents, uncles, sisters-in-law, children, and off he set. He was optimistically sure of finding work on his arrival, apparently ignorant of the fact that Los Angeles had a surplus out-of-work population of some eight thousand. But if America has done one thing to the present generation of workmen, it has robbed it of the horror of losing its job. Prosperity has raised the workman's courage to a height unknown in the history of employment. But, we may ask, how long can this continue? The modern optimistic theory holds that wealth is like a snowball. Once set it going and it will roll on, swelling automatically. Make the workman a large consumer and he pays back the increase in his own wages; increase his wages and he increases his consumption. Thrift is a mere check in the system. Spend all you have; spend it before you have got it; earn and spend; spend and earn. Where are the mottoes of our childhood?

But what if the prosperity is trembling on the apex? How will the American workman, used to luxury, settle down to the raw conditions of a harsh competition? He is good humoured, an excellent man in success and ease; but beneath his good humour we suggest that there lies a quick exaspera-



tion. He is not of a very patient temper. We wonder how this easy temper would survive a decade of lean years.

We looked at the Great Smokies on the map but decided that the coverlet country was more to our liking.

They hung by the roadside outside of the cottages, as though drying in the sun, with an air of careless abandon to the breeze. We stopped for information and a roughly clad woman came out. Her very roughness almost tempted us to buy, but a few questions made us suspect that her appearance was a part of her salesmanship; she was no hand worker but a middlewoman. The coverlets were gay in colour worked by a method called candlewick, because the original embroidery was executed with the threads meant for the wicks of tallow candles. These were stitched through thick cotton sheets and cut off so as to form tufts of varied colours and shapes, baskets of flowers and peacocks and many another bold design. When sewn, the coverlet was washed, so that a shrinkage in the material gripped the threads of the embroidery tight. But the beauty of these coverlets could not rival that of the patchwork quilts; and later we discovered why. An exploited industry, supervised by middlemen of bourgeoisie ideals it has already lost that instinctive beauty which the genuine peasant almost always contrives to impress on his productions.

As we went along, the coverlets grew more numerous. For a space of ten miles every cottage displayed a show; then suddenly they faded from sight. Another example of the intensive spirit of imitation, before noted.

At Calhoun we stopped to buy provisions, but Jo, seeing a local newspaper office, entered there and interviewed the editor. He was in shirt sleeves, serving in the shop, so

we presumed him to be everything else, as had been our friend of the Show Boat.

He could not remember any interesting local fiddlers, but he told us of another kind of music.

"In Sugar Valley, not so far from here, they're going to hold a singing convention, all day tomorrow and Sunday."

We set off under his directions. On our way out of the town we noticed a cottage outside of which a row of quilts were hanging from a line.

"Stop," cried Jo, "I'm going in to enquire."

The door of the house was opened to us by a gentle faced old woman in a mob cap, a quiet face which had aged so softly that time had scored no rough mark anywhere. Jo asked about the quilts and the woman, opening the door wider, meditated.

"Them quilts belong to my daughter-in-law. She's away," she said. "But I got some quilts I made myself."

An air of taste pervaded that house; not a deliberate taste, such as marks New England, but a natural settling together of harmonious objects in an almost instinctive fashion. The woodwork was fine and the furniture matched the period of the building. There was even restraint amongst the sideboard-cluttering vulgarities which so attract the simple mind—no mother-of-pearl boxes, few coloured photographs or painted vases. The old woman opened a cedar chest and drew out her quilts.

"This is the log-cabin," she said. "This is the half-built house, this is a crazy quilt—"

One by one she spread them under our eyes, giving each its appropriate name. At last she brought out one evidently her favourite. As she spread it out Jo gave a cry of amazement. It was white, and across the surface a set of peculiar flowers were appliquéd; the whole was quilted to match the design in fine stitching.

"That's the sunflower pattern," said the old woman proudly.

"These," she said, pointing to the ordinary quilts, "come to five dollars each, like my daughter-in-law asks. But this one," she touched the sunflower quilt, "why I'd want more. You see, I made that myself when I was almost a girl. And so I don't want to bargain about it. I'll tell you the price but just say yes or no. Now you won't try to beat me down on it, will you? I don't want to sell it like that."

We agreed to stand by conditions, expecting of course a price far beyond our pockets.

"Well then," she said sternly, "I'd let it go for ten dollars; but no bargaining mind you. I just don't want to bargain about this one."

Nor did we feel inclined to bargain. We paid the ten dollars without protest.

"If you thought you wanted any of my daughter-in-law's" she said, "why you can write to me. The name's Mistress Mary Jacks—Mistress Mary Jacks, Calhoun, Georgia. I'm real content you didn't try to beat me down over that one."

We protested our mutual satisfaction and, folding the quilt carefully in the car, we resumed our way to Sugar Valley.



### CHAPTER XIII

#### A SINGING CONVENTION IN SUGAR VALLEY

At the entrance of Sugar Valley was a little hamlet with a post office and some shops. In one of these we asked directions, and the storekeeper, after a chat, led us into an annex of his shop where, piled in bales, were candlewick quilts of very poor quality. Even wiser than the roadside merchants, he was engaged in a regular exploitation, sweating the mountain women, to whom real money was such a rarity that two dollars for a finished quilt seemed a windfall to them. So that, in this part of wealthy America, hand labour is scarcely better paid than it is in the harems of the Balkans.

The place of the convention was some miles further along, and the road became worse as we proceeded until we arrived at a deep stream where a man in a half submerged Chevrolet sat philosophically waiting for his engine to dry out. We forded the stream cautiously and got across.

"Can we give you any help?" we shouted to him.

"I guess she'll be all right in a minute or two," he replied.

We came to a wide green surrounded by a wood. A building stood on either hand, a white one in repair and an old one with windows broken. On the other side of the road was a farm house to which Jo went in query. The house stood open but empty. She hammered the doors and shouted without answer. Hearing voices in the white building she stepped over to find that it was the place in question. A few girls were cleaning up for the coming festival.

Jo found a difficulty in explaining at once why we were there. This was not an important affair, and the question why strangers from England should come to listen to it only awoke the country suspicion of anything that is not easily intelligible. At last one of the girls said:

"Did you see that big house beyond the stream. You go back there and ask my pop, Farmer Morton. That's the new school, he's got the contract for the roofing."

We had indeed been puzzled by the magnificence of this building amid the apparent poverty of the countryside, in no place that any sensible man would have chosen for a mansion. The word "school" explained much. There is a frenzy of school building, the money borrowed by long date bond issues, "making posterity pay," as one American writer has it; the schools are centralized and the children fetched from all around by motor omnibuses. We forded the stream again and tried to hold a long distance interview with the farmer on the roof. Our explanation was now even more in difficulties, but Farmer Morton, on the ridgepole, dodged a suspicion of churlishness by saying that his barn was too low to give our car admittance to the paddock. We suggested camping on the church green, but Farmer Morton "opined" that the church council would not like that. He suggested that we should try Farmer Stokes, next



but one farm to his down the valley. But Farmer Stokes didn't allow he had any place where we could put a car without getting it stuck in the dirt. He handed us on to Farmer White. The latter was not at home but his wife was. She answered, "Oh, I couldn't," ran into the house, shut the door and locked it. The next farm was open but



A BARN IN NORTH GEORGIA

empty, its people away working in the broad cotton fields which stretched on every hand to the low hills which enclosed the valley. We began to wonder if there was a man anywhere who would allow us to camp.

We came to the last farm. A space lay before it; the old barn stood to one side, picturesquely built of open work logs, as are many of these Georgian barns; a tall post carrying swinging gourds for the birds to nest in seemed to indicate a certain quality of sweetness in the farmer. We wondered if he would be as kind to us as to the birds. He was. A browned and handsome man in blue overalls came down the house steps to meet Jo, who had armed herself with our lecture advertisement as a certificate of respectability. Actually for a moment the paper led to confusion, the farmer couldn't guess what we were trying to sell him. Then Jo said diplomatically:

"Farmer Morton and Farmer Stokes opined you had the best place for camping in the valley."

"So Farmer Morton and Farmer Stokes sent you on here did they?" said the man. The knowledge of the names already began to reassure him. We did not seem such total strangers. Farmer Morton evidently held a high place in the valley.

"You an Englishman?" said the farmer then to Jo.

"Yes."

"Still you don't speak English good," he said, thinking of course that his dialect was the criterion.

"Well," he said at last, "I guess you can stay; but," a sudden suspicion crossed his mind, "why didn't Farmer Morton let you into his own place?"

"His barn wasn't tall enough to pass us through," Jo said.

To offer a *quid pro quo* Jo then asked him if he could sell us milk and butter.

"I'll tell my wife," he answered.

A little girl came out bringing us the milk and the butter; but afterwards when Jo would have paid for these things the wife said:

"Oh, I couldn't think of taking payment for such. I never sold it like that."

They invited us into the farm for the evening. The place was almost wholly devoid of ornament, a calendar hung for use, a big Bible and a Sears Roebuck catalogue, of almost the same size, lay on a table covered with a plush cloth—spiritual and material enlightenment side by side. On the veranda were rocking chairs, and the back porch ended in a well, half buried in the shade of creepers. We played them Spanish music and told them tales of travel. We had been warned not to tell the simpler folks such stories, for they would tend to disbelieve them and despise anybody who ventured beyond their personal experience; but the farmer, his wife and the three children, crouched on the floor, drank in

these tales with avidity. The man had a peculiar quality, a kind of spiritual resonance. If we struck him with a thought he echoed harmoniously, like a sound bell.

His wife had a spontaneous motherliness which enveloped us with a tender solicitude; the children were all stocky young countrymen in their suits of jean, but they were keen, and a stray paper blowing into our tent told us that the eldest was taking courses in agriculture from a Correspondence College.

Next morning as we were preparing for breakfast the girl came to the door of the tent with a dish.

"Mother sent this to you," she said shyly.

Fried chicken in a delicious sauce was piled there. Later we heard that the mother had said:

"Now you take this out to them English folks. Living the way those folks is doing they won't get enough grease."

Already we had been invited to lunch with the party on the church green, and we in return were to transport the family to the place in our car. Somehow we packed in all except the two boys, but they could well walk, as the distance was not above two miles or so. Good Farmer Godfrey and his wife were stiff with a consciousness of Sunday clothes, but as we went along he confided in me that he did not lack a car out of penury but because he was waiting to see what was this new thing that Mr. Ford had promised. Poor fellow, he looked as healthy as could be, but before ever Mr. Ford had placed his new model on the market Mr. Godfrey was dead. His wife, in a letter beautiful because of its broken simplicity, told us how he had fallen with heart disease on the road alone one evening coming from Calhoun.

At the church grounds we watched the other families drive up one by one. Only two came in cars; the rest had their old fashioned spider wheeled buggies with concave steel

tires. Rigidly upright on the front seat were the farmer and his wife, while at the back clustered the children with the lunch baskets. As each drove up Jo was more and more overjoyed.

"Jan, what faces!" she exclaimed. "Each one is more wonderful than the last. What fortunes they would make at Hollywood!"

For many years we had imagined that the old American types in the movies were picked jewels; but we found them there and subsequently. As each couple arrived the woman got down while the man drove into the wood to what evidently was his customary tree where he tied up his beast.

The deacon did not show up till a half-hour late. It was rather understood that he did not quite approve of an occasion which marked the encroachment of modernism. An attempt was being made to foist onto the church a new hymn book. Booksellers had been invited to submit suitable volumes of more modern hymns. Some of the younger set feared perhaps that the old hymns would sound out of fashion in the ears of God. Two days were to be given to the task of selection.

The deacon arrived and mustered us into the church. The men gathered on the dais, at least those did who intended to take part in the singing; the women, with Jo amongst them, ranked up behind in that subordinate place which is theirs in rural communities. The deacon and elders sat on the platform behind the reading desk and harmonium. The little chapel was quite undecorated; in fact, until we had played there, I had hardly understood that we were in a church at all.

The first sample hymn book was distributed and the preacher said:

"Now, Brother Reeks, suppose you lead us in this one."

Brother Reeks, tall in a fine tail coat, demurred out of

politeness, but bent to circumstances and cleared his throat. The organist repeated the tune till Brother Reeks had it by ear when he chimed in. The rest of the members either followed the Brother in unison or tried to read seconds from the notes in accordance with their respective talents. It was a rather tentative and mournful performance. But we, as spectators, were amazed to find how much the art of the despised Negro had influenced these religious exercises. Both the spiritual and the jazz were easily discernible in the tunes. The verse might be the verse of Jacob but the tunes were the tunes of Esau. Indeed isn't the black man taking a subtle revenge on his former masters in that he has corrupted their language, spoiled their diction, dominated their dance and their song and is now colouring their religion?

After five or six samples led by the stronger soloists the preacher said:

"Now let's compare with one of the old favourites."

Which was hardly fair; for everybody roared out the old tune with gusto and with the enthusiasm of long mastery.

The deacon shook his head.

"Seems to me these new toons don't ring so well as those old ones. However let's try out one or two more."

A new hymnbook was handed about. We sampled another set of the spiritual-*cum*-jazz compositions—the Salvation Army taking possession of the pulpit. The preacher sat on in his chair with visible disapproval written all over his face. But the decision did not rest with him; it depended on the popular vote, and many had modernistic leanings. The fate of the hymn books was by no means to be settled this day. Wait till the morrow when some of the most enthusiastic came in from the cotton fields.

Then the preacher announced:

"Brother Godfrey has told me that we have here two dis-



tinguished visitors from Europe. They have been round collecting hymn toons which they play on foreign instruments. Mister Gordon and Mistress Gordon have consented to give us some varieties of their hymn toons on their instruments."

Farmer Godfrey had indeed told the preacher, but not that we would play hymn tunes; in fact he had excused the very secular nature of our music by saying that:

"Just plain music can't be in any ways wicked."

For he was aware that they were no less than dances, irreligious dance music, which, to the narrow mind of the fundamentalist countryman, is much more irreligious if played on an instrument than if sung. The blankest silence greeted our performance of two Spanish dances. Indeed I felt by telepathy the indiscretion of giving such music in that place and to that audience; but we had been asked. Jo was panicked so much that she tried to counter catastrophe by hurriedly exclaiming:

"Now we will give you a piece by Bach. He, you know, used to write for churches."

We had indeed nothing of a less secular nature to offer than Bach's "Gavotte" from the "Suite Anglaise." However, to the average mind anything of a fuguey nature seems religious. I fear that they saw through us; and anyway the influences had gathered so thick that Jo broke down in the middle, and we abandoned the attempt. The deacon thanked us coldly and as we were tucking our instruments back into their cases they purged the atmosphere with a few more hymns. Then the interval for lunch was announced.

Benches had been ranged on the church green and on them the contents of those baskets, carried in the buggies, were spread in tempting succulence. Under the southern sun the culinary prizes of many a farm were proudly exhibited. Pickles of subtle sorts, spiced meats in variety, pies, biscuits, hams, fried chickens, pig in many disguises, pre-

serves—fifty dishes, all different, were submitted to our choice; and the envious artists watched to see that we did not pass over their dainties. It was too much. Good eating is a delight, but here we were hung on the dilemma of repletion or of offence. The good people pressed more and more of their wares on our failing appetites. It was lucky for us that some were still shy or we would hardly have escaped. But a Sunday tone still ruled, and bonds of good manners limited their natural expansiveness. Even our nice Mrs. Godfrey became conventional. These country women, seen thus in a group, condensed into a solid image impressions which had been accumulating. What are the conditions which determine the character and appearance of the aging farm woman of America? She is like a walnut, sweet and soft enough inside, but with a queerly wrinkled and hard crust. In youth she gives little indication of those stern lines of disapproval which will eventually bind the nose wings to the mouth corners; you would with difficulty predict the eventual disappearance of the rosy lips into the tight folded mouth, or the amazing projection of the chin. If you believe that faces are born and not made, consider the country girl and her mother; what harshness of fate or creed has thus transformed the butterfly into the chrysalis? After forty, an odd masculinity so dispossesses them of feminine traits that they seem to be masqueraders tricked out in a skirt and feathered hat.

The men grew easier. At first the preacher had been inclined to eye me with suspicion, possibly because of our Spanish music; but lunch softened him, so that I was admitted to the conclave which eventually settled on the church steps and discussed questions important to men while the women held themselves strictly apart and talked of domestic interests, in which Jo was sadly deficient of material.

The men's talk began naturally with the question of the rotation of crops. All agreed to the idea in principle, but few seemed able to find energy to put their theories into practise. They had fallen into the routine of cotton planting and, although the cotton plants were growing weaker every year, although the boll-weevil was doing incalculable damage, the labour and expense necessary to rescue the land exhausted by the cotton crops was too much for their Southern natures. One man said in almost a wail:

"There ain't just nothing which will grow after cotton."

The preacher himself was a cotton farmer; he did not get pay for his ministry; but, although he was able to show his flock the way to a better life in the hereafter, he could not give an example for the present. However, the talk took a more interesting turn. It passed through the subject of the weather influences on the cotton, but it ended in the question, ever popular I believe, of the susceptibility of "hawgs" to lightning.

"I says," declared one member outright, "that hawgs is the most susceptible animile there is to this here lightning."

The consensus of opinion agreed and nothing was left to the discussion except to rake up affirmatory stories. But the deacon told a double ended tale which switched the talk onto another debatable ground.

"I had a lot of hawgs and an old mule," he said, "and this here lightnin' struck right in the middle of them. They was lyin' out near a high set porch and the lightnin' just bounced off that roof an' ran down a post. It knocked that old mule clear offen his laigs; but in about half a minute, he was up again, kinda shook himself, looked at that raised porch and backed away from it as if it was so much poison. Every one of them hawgs was killed stone dead. Yes, sir. But thet old mule was up on his feet again in half a minute. Kind-a trembly he was for a day or so, but not hurt other-

wise, not at all. They says as mules haven't got any intelligence, ain't reflecting animiles, ain't no sense at all. I tell you, then, my old mule he thought some about that there happening. Only he didn't think quite right, see. He got into his head it was the porch what did it. And I'm blest if ever I could get him near a raised bit of flooring again. Why, when I takes him to the depo' I got to leave him clear across the road. One look at a piece of raised floor, and he begins to buck and kick. They tells you that these animiles can't think, but believe me that old mule of mine he thought all right. 'Twasn't his fault he got it all wrong; him not understanding this electricity stuff, naturally."

And this subject occupied the conclave until the time came to go back to the singing, which some did with evident reluctance.

We felt that we had now caught sufficiently the flavour of the convention. The happenings on the morrow would but double those of today. The atmosphere was sedate and homely and we did not think that we would gain more by waiting. We had many a mile of road still to travel before we began to turn our wandering wheels northwards. So we took an affectionate farewell of our kind hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey, drove back to the farm, packed the tent and steered out of Sugar Valley.

As we went along the road we met the high wagons coming in with their loads of freshly picked cotton for the presses. Sitting on the top of the white, fluffy mounds of pod, the Negroes, in blue and white, their black faces gleaming under broad brimmed straw hats, were crooning those strange musical monologue improvisations which are such a feature of their race.





#### CHAPTER XIV

#### COLOUR IN ATLANTA

THE landscape of the South has what the landscape of the North rather lacks, contrast. The trees have a dingier colour; the herbage is burned; cotton is by no means a spectacular crop, for it grows on small scrubby bushes poor in leafage; and yet a richer feeling does envelop the South. Poorer in quality of colour, it is richer in suggestion. The red dust veils everything in a haze, like the varnish on an old master, through which the rich reds and oranges glow with an extra vehemence. The poor two-roomed cabins standing in their enclosures of whitewashed earth, the sudden bursts of vivid scarlet blossoms of big leaved plants and the dark foliage overhead combine to make a picture which is sometimes almost related to the quality of a tinted post-card. Under these crude colours is a grey chiaroscuro—indeed a tinted photograph describes the thing closely.



A sunlit poverty broods over the Georgian landscape; and well it may, for during many years the boll-weevil has been wrecking the cotton crops. Possibly the condition of the road made us most aware of the fact, for mile after mile we travelled on red earth roads from which the dust rose in clouds and settled on the car until the "Hearse" looked like the wagon of a rattle man. Now and then on the road we drove into a flock of turkey buzzards which flapped off disdainfully at our approach leaving the air polluted with the stink of their carrion soaked plumage. The smell drifted into the car and clung there like a poison gas; not quite as pungent perhaps as the odour of an angered skunk, but quite as disgusting in quality.

Perhaps a surer sign of poverty was the almost entire absence of advertisement; even the ubiquitous Coca-cola and chewing tobacco no longer brightened the tree trunks; these people were not worth advertising for. Supreme expression of commercial contempt! Commercial contempt, yes, but as the commercial advertisements faded away their place was taken by others—spiritual messages. Where the goods of this world retired the goods of the next took up the struggle. Grim signs greeted us from the trees on which ill lettered placards were nailed warning us of the world to come.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.

JESUS IS WAITING FOR YOU ROUND THE CORNER.

TODAY YOU MAY BE IN HELL.

EVERY MAN ON THE ROAD EXCEPT YOURSELF IS A FOOL.

DEATH IS WAITING FOR YOU NOW.

IN ONE HOUR YOU MAY BE DEAD.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF HELL FOR EVER?

Some had only skulls and crossbones on them; but at the top of one sinuous descent a large notice combined grue and commerce:

AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS HILL YOU WILL PROBABLY NEED US.  
REED AND CO.; MORTICIANS AND AMBULANCE SERVICE.

At the top of the next rise was a corresponding board:

YOU FOOLED US THAT TIME. BUT TAKE NOTE OF OUR ADDRESS,  
YOU NEVER KNOW YOUR LUCK.

And at the entrance of the dreariest little town it was our fortune to find on the whole trip, a sign said:

DRIVE SLOW, SEE OUR TOWN: DRIVE FAST, SEE OUR JUDGE.

No matter how poor a state may be, towns have their pride. A few miles from Atlanta the concrete began again to usher us into the city. The cars meeting us had across their radiators the slogan, "Gate City of the South," a recrudescence of boasting as in the North; since Atlanta aspires also to commercial importance. We passed through the town to a seminary for young coloured women. The new Principal of this college was a lady we had met in New York; she had given us a general invitation to visit her should we come to Atlanta and we arrived just in time to catch her in the act of trying on her inauguration robes.

By tradition the college was religious and strict. To the distress of the pupils it frowned on ostentation in dress, and the girls eagerly watched the first public appearance of the Principal to deduce if a weakening was visible in her costume towards the embargo on heels of extra height. But the Principal wore Oxfords and the college heaved a united sigh of resignation. Yet, considering the poverty of many of the homes from which the girls came the church parade was a

tribute to what can be done on very little. Like the Scotch, the Negroes put themselves to great privations in order to get education for their children; and in the college itself practically all the homework, kitchen work, etc., was done by poor girls in exchange for classes. The Negro is more eager for education than the poor white. Eighty per cent are now literate although public outlay on coloured education is only one fifth the part per head of that expended on a white child.

They had not yet that touchy sense of white folks' ridicule which has made the northern Negro so self-conscious. They did not know that, because the traditional Mammy wore bright colours, therefore bright colours were taboo; so they wore what colours they liked and made a pretty bouquet as they filed into chapel on a morning; but they did know of the vulgarity of kinky hair, and thus on Inauguration Day the campus smelt persistently of singed hair and of heated vaseline, for with a comb of heated metal and the unguent even the kinkiest of hair can be persuaded, temporarily, to lie straight.

They were at college to learn all sorts of things; Latin and algebra, chemistry and biology; to be taught so that they might teach in turn; thrusting the coloured race sternly upwards into an American society which is far from ready to admit it at any level other than the very lowest, putting themselves into the predicament of Kipling's Tomlinson, fit neither for Heaven nor for Hell, scorned in the one, scorning the other.

The red buildings were spaced round the wide green quadrangle on which the young people loitered in groups, drilled, played basket ball or whispered girlish secrets in their suave Afro-American voices. In the evening when the light was shining from the big arched door of the main building the girls, sitting on the steps in banks of coloured raiment,

invoked their sad past as their voices swelled into the uncontrollable song of the Negro, into that simple spiritual music which, more easily than words, seems to express the black man's emotions:

There's a li'll wheel a-turning in my heart, O Lord,  
 A li'll wheel a-turning in my heart,  
 In my heart, in my heart, in my heart, O Lord,  
 A li'll wheel a-turning in my heart. . . .

A visitor, unhampered by accident of birth, yet not ignorant of words such as "prejudice" or "problem," might see strange contrasts here, such as the spry little children of the junior classes, just past the pickaninny stage, with a certain perkiness like Californian blackbirds. Or the girls of the senior school, already aware of the social value of tint, knowing that a fair skin is of more worth than virtue and naturally straight hair a passport into the best coloured society. Or the gang of nurses, rollicking plebeians of deep hue, over whom hung the threat of an enquiry about their goings on. Or the visiting ex-student, wife of a minister, a poor old lady in rusty black whose certificates for Latin or biology had long been foundered under the cares of a family, but who wished dearly to hear a few words of French spoken, and carried away the experience as a treasurable memory. Or the college musician—violinist, pianist, organist—a man of humour and of observation. Or, to touch the highest pitch of the Afro-American scale, the Principal of the boys' College, a coloured gentleman whom it was more of a compliment to address as "Mister" than as "Doctor," since, to a white Southerner, a Negro, even a Doctor of Philosophy, has no right to anything more than the familiar Christian name; as if he were the meanest labourer. In spite of his intellect and his honours, he had schooled himself to hold his hat in both hands when greeting a white

man; so that he could avoid any appearance of needing a hand-shake, unless you chose to offer it. Or, again, the old gardener, with white whiskers, who so slowly swept up the leaves from the campus grass.

One sunny afternoon he approached me.

"I heard, Suh," he said in his soft insinuating speech, "as you wuz an Englishman, travelling to see diffrent kinds of things. Well, Suh, I tho't you might perhaps care to see how the home of a poh' cullud man is. If that's so will you honour my home with a visit? I tho't, Suh, I might offer this to an Englishman in remembrance, Suh, how your nation first took an interest in the fate of ours, Suh, and thet we owe our liberty to the exertions of your people, perhaps relations, Suh?"

He smiled the long, slow smile of the cajoling Negro.

"You see, Suh, I owns ma' own home here, Suh. I sho'ly do."

He was proud that he had climbed to this from being a slave child; in which capacity he had been present at the taking of Atlanta by Sherman.

"Our old mas'er wuz a good man, Suh, and my Mammy she carry away old missises jewels and money hidden in her mattress. And when things come settled again, she give dem back. Sho, yes, Suh, t'ings would ha' bin a sight wuss in this here Sout' if dere hadn't bin a lot of cullud folks what could t'ink of good white people and a lot of white people what 'membered good cullud folks too. Yes Suh, we didn't have no such hard feelings in dem days. But it got wuss on bot' sides since.

"Yes, Suh, we run away when dem No'the'n soldiers come. An' we cullud folks we run jus' as fast. I 'member I hear tell how they goin' to cook us alive an' eat us too. No, Suh, I didn't want to be et. We got some ways out-a de town when a No'the'n soldier on a hoss comes ridin' after my ol'



masser. His face wuz all red an' he wuz swearing. He rode after my ol' boss wid a pistol an' he try to shoot him wit' de pistol in he hand. But dat pistol don' go off; sho de Lord make it miss fire. Dat's so. An' old mas'er he run fo' de woods, sho' he did, an' dat soldier, swearing, he ride after him and try to hit old mas'er on de haid wit' de pistol. But old mas'er he jump and he skip so dat soldier don't git him. An by'm'by he git to de wood where the hoss can't follow him and so he 'scapes. An' dat man he come back an' he swear at my ol' missis like nuthin' I ever hear befo'. His face git redder and redder as long as he shout, and we chilluns wuz all crying an' hollerin' 'cause we thought we might-a killed old mas'er or we might get took back and cooked and et. Yes, we wuz all cryin' an hollerin' an my mother, what had missus' jewels and things in her mattress, she wuz quakin' 'cause she wuz 'feared as somebody might fin' dem; an' what would happen den?

"Well, Suh, I'll sholy be proud to have you come to ma house. An' my wife she'll be proud too, sho, Suh."

We gave a lecture to the assembled girls, and never has a harder task been set before us. The audience gazed up at us with a masked expression of Stygian gloom. They may have studied all the sciences and arts, but outside of the narrow lines of their studies they knew nothing except their immediate or previous surroundings; cabins and cotton fields, aeroplanes and radios were commonplaces; but of European life, not a thing; nor could any bridge be built in a single hour by which we might cross over into their comprehension. Besides the only lectures they had attended previously had been those of missionaries, and they had at once shut their minds, in the way one naturally does to such improving talk. They could not realise that we were trying to amuse them, and when the sermon did not come they

were left wondering what the talk was all about. Then again we did not understand at first how difficult our English dialect would be to them. At any rate, talk as best we might, our audience remained as expressionless as the bottom of a blackened pot; not a flash of an eyeball, not one gleam of teeth, could we awaken in that dense blackness. Their minds were strictly circumscribed by five boundaries—domesticity, vanity, lessons, religion and sex—how could we, who were talking of the poetry of humility and the arts of the illiterate, touch them?

But when we began to play, another humour was at once visible. The audience came alive. To music they responded instinctively; it was an international language. Strange Spanish rhythms, which once baffled an educated English colonel, were easy to them. We could feel that audience sway to those fluid rhythms, understanding them as they should be understood, with musically sensitive ears.

After the experience gained here we lectured to the boys' college. But now we interlarded snatches of the music with the talk, and spoke mostly of the sporting element in European life; by analogy with a football match they could understand a bull-fight. Nevertheless, without venturing a wholesale judgment, we estimated the boys as being almost fifty per cent brighter than the girls. But the girls were still under a strict bondage, that protective system built up to give value to one invaluable commodity, virtue; from many of the limitations contingent on this conditions the boys were free. But in any case, no matter how individuals may develop, a wholesale sense of responsibility is with difficulty inculcated in two generations. Slavery is bound to cling to a race no matter what aspect it may assume, that of submission or that of revolt.

By the assistance of the young manager of a gramophone company I got admission one night to the Negro theatre in

Decatur Street. An interesting character this Gramophonist. An adventurer in search of music, he made tours of discovery both into the lowest haunts of the Negroes, hunting up possible singers of blues, and up into the mountains, where an unauthorised person might be in positive danger.

Later we met a Northerner who had tried to get into the mountains with a car. He had been astonished at the savagery of the people there. They had refused him water for his radiator and had at last literally hustled him out at the point of their guns. Noting his clothes I asked a question, inspired by information won from our Gramophonist.

"Do you always wear blue suits?" I asked.

"Yes."

"That is the reason for your treatment," I answered.

"It's lucky you got no worse. Blue is the colour of the revenue officers."

Decatur Street, Atlanta, on a Saturday night, would not lead you to think yourself in a prohibitionist country. Here the Negroes spend their weekly wages, and they spend much of it on bootleg.

A notice over the door of the theatre said: "Positively no white people admitted." The show was a mixture of cinema and vaudeville. In the cinema white men and girls naturally took the parts, and the blacks enjoyed the pleasures, pains, virtues and vices of the superior race which they are learning to hate. But in the movies the actors no longer represent a racial folk; they are merely the vessels from which emotion and adventure are poured. On the coasts of Africa, in Java, Shanghai or Timbuctoo, the movies play to audiences even more enthralled than those of London or Paris. In his amusement the Burman is far less provincial than the average Middle Westerner. These Negroes were every whit as excited by the adventures of a Tom Mix, even if they did seethe with a sense of suppression.

Seethe with a sense of suppression? The very air of Atlanta was sinister with it. The Negroes in the streets looked at one with humourless eyes, and in the tram cars one could not help but notice how the Negro women had to stand, even if there were seats empty, because a coloured person might not sit nearer to the driver than the furthest white. As though the driver were a man of dignity and the conductor one of abasement.

And yet in the vaudeville half of the performance the Negroes laughed at themselves from the white man's point of view. The women in the show were as white as could be found, but the comic reliefs were blacked and with enlarged whitened mouths, as in the old nigger minstrels. The shiftless, lazy, drunken coward, with a loose and easy tongue, sneaking out of difficulties by means of a verbal twist of talk drew volleys of applause from the audience. The more he showed himself to be the contemptible nigger, the better they liked him. If anybody has acquired the art of seeing himself as others see him, the Negro has done so in his comedy.

There was no sense of suppression in the coloured choir which came one night to the gramophone studio for a test of their singing value. They were humble and hopeful. Money was needed for their church and they wished to wrest it from commerce by the sweetness of their song. The leader was a little old darky, his rounded nut covered closely with a short crop of grey bristle. He was very anxious to please:

"Yes, Suh. No, Suh. As you please, Suh, sholy—"

They ranged themselves up before the white arbiter and sang earnestly but anxiously. The young Gramophonist nibbled his pencil over the chorals.

"Now you watch," he said to me.

"Yes, yes," he said to them comfortingly. "Now, look here. Haven't you got a piece with a good bass part in it?"

"Jess as you like, Suh," said the leader beaming. Afterwards, with non-committal words our young host ushered the choir back into the night.

"Did you hear that?" he said to me. "They had a real good bass voice there, but that little leader couldn't think of letting him take the part; see. Had to get all the glory himself. No sense of team work. Didn't want that other fellow to show up. Vanity, eh? Just like children, that's the only way to treat them. Oh, we get about a dozen trials like that every month. Get hard hearted about it in time. I may hunt up that bass singer, though."

He gave me the address of a man who could mend a split in my guitar. And thus we met the only true booster we found on our journey. You might expect to find him in one of the competitive professions—storekeeper, advertising man, high-pressure salesman, Rotarian, pastor, politician or realtor—but to find him in a genuine craftsman, a man who manufactured fine violins by hand, was surprising. He knocked Europe hard, knocked European violins also; American violins were much better he said; and, without being too modest, he could say right now where the best violins in America at this moment were made. Where but in the finest city of the whole of the States too, that is, in the whole world? He did not name the city or the man, and a sense of modesty for him prevented me from drawing him on further.

The Negro organist of the girl's college was a humourist with a sense of the picturesque. He put us on the track of that "shape note" singing which coloured much of our later



experience. Unluckily there was no shape note "sing" in the vicinity of Atlanta during our stay. We had at the time to be content with his description.

"This is a system of singing at sight by drawing every note of the scale a different shape. These can be printed on the stave in the ordinary way, but, while the organist is reading the stave, the singer has only to read the intervals shown by the different shapes of the notes. It is in fact a graphic Sol-Fa system.

"In the contests, which are quite exciting, the choirs come together in a chapel. There is one famous choir here, but the leader is even more famous. He is called Brother Eph. If he and his choir come to any "sing" it is sure to be a success. The old man has a sense of the dramatic. Last time I saw him he was only two hours late. The choirs had all sung; only Brother Eph's had not. Everybody was wondering if he were coming. When he did arrive he made a little speech saying that he was coming along with a friend but the car broke down. He tried to proceed on foot, but was making slow work of it when a white farmer drove by, and the Lord put it into the white man's head to 'offer your coloured brother a lift.' That's how he got there, so he said.

"The old fellow had on a long tailed coat and check pants, a white waistcoat spanned by a big gold chain, but no watch I guess, a pair of spats and a cane. He wore an old plug hat, which he carefully placed on the harmonium, and he had a big rose-coloured tie with a huge imitation emerald stickpin in it. First he began to arrange his choir.

" 'Sister Mary,' he'd shout, 'you come right up to da front. An', Brother Zeb, you get jus' back of Sister Claruss there, and you Brother Hezekiah you come right up side of Sister Euniss—'

"Then he'd make Brother Zeb give the note and they'd all try it out to see if it fitted. If it didn't they'd try out

another key and so on. But, once they got fixed, that old fellow's antics you'd never believe. All these conductors jump about and dance to get their choirs enthusiastic, but he beat them all. He'd do Charlestons and hoochy-koochys and dances you'd never heard of. He'd get all the folks so excited that they'd be shouting and yelling. Pretty near no use competing against him. He always got the prize when he went after it; and he had a really good choir too. But sometimes he'd get contrary. He'd send his choir and then he'd never turn up."

The evening came when we were to visit the old Negro gardener. He had proposed to get in some ice cream in our honour, but, wishing to spare him expense, I had suggested that we would rather test his wife's cookies.

He came to the college to escort us, because the lighting conditions in the coloured sections of the city, as in most Southern cities, were as poor as those in a Serbian slum. As we went along he said:

"My wife she t'ink it awful nerve dat I ask you to my house, fo' sho. But I says to her, 'Dere's som't'in' in de face of a man, an' if I can't read dat man on his face I'm wrong.' An', Suh, I'm jest nachully devoted to yo' face."

Thanking him for his good opinion, we progressed into darkness which grew denser as we went. The sidewalks were only earth raised higher than the earthen roads. Dim glows from the small houses occasionally lit a piece of the path, only to make the rest seem even darker. From slavery Mr. Jones had risen to become the owner of two houses, so that we could not determine whether his first name of Cash was a compliment to his present achievement or a wish-thought of his mother's in days gone by. At any rate if the patron saint stood at his christening he had surely chosen the most efficient in the whole catalogue.

We had seen these Negro quarters in the daytime, for the coloured President of the boys' college had taken us for a ride in his car. He had an eagerness almost pathetic to show us that the charges of wastrelism and incapacity which are so often brought against the Negro as a race were without foundation. He told us that the Negro was a passionate home lover, and one of his first desires was to own his own house. On this subject we had a chat with a Southern woman with leanings towards the Negroes, up to a point. She was deploring an incident which had occurred in another state. Some of the richer Negroes, desiring naturally to escape from the horrid lighting and sanitary conditions of the modern Negro Ghetto, had ventured to buy houses in a quarter hitherto inhabited only by whites. One night the whites had bombed the Negroes' houses, wounding several, and of course doing much destruction to their property.

"I think it a real shame," cried the Southern lady, "to destroy the property of the poor people like that. No, they should have bombed the houses of the realty men who sold the houses to the Negroes in the first place. Those were the real criminals."

Mr. Jones' house was filled with enormous pieces of furniture. The best bed was a monstrous affair with a tall carved back of looming walnut, possibly of some value, since the Negroes of the South had many an opportunity of buying old furniture from the sold up plantations. Indeed they say that Negro houses are the most fruitful hunting grounds for the antiquarian today. The inside was somewhat cluttered, as though Mr. and Mrs. Jones had something of the magpie spirit; yet amidst the clutter they had achieved a dingy comfort. Cash Jones, ex-slave, was as well off, as well lodged as is the average English labourer, and not a whit more dingy.

His wife was a bright little woman, but from the kitchen he dragged out two old Negro females who regarded us with enigmatical expressions and drew back into the kitchen again as soon as possible. We could perceive the knee of one as she sat there stolidly listening. From time to time Mr. Cash Jones urged them to come out and join the company; the knee quivered but neither would move. Whether they stuck there from bashfulness, whether they were frightened by Mr. Jones' temerity, or whether they were outraged by the presence of white people, we could not decide. At any rate we felt in them a strong sense of opposition and repudiation.

Atlanta is not the best place in which to study the Negro question. A very different humour reigns here from that in New Orleans, for instance. The sense of injustice which is growing in the black race increases in proportion to its industrialisation, for, not only does the white man get more pay for the same kind of work but he shows an arrogance which does nothing to lessen the widening breach.

I wish we could reproduce Mr. Jones' conversation, because it was not bitter. He had been himself a slave, though only a little one, and I think he understood that a race cannot wholly step forward in so few years. Indeed he was pardonably vain of his own achievement under considerable drawbacks and difficulties.

The Negro is in that unlucky situation where he must needs admire and imitate the very man who keeps him degraded. At one time Mr. Jones was boasting of connections with a certain Colonel, by which he had been admitted where a strange nigger would have been half flogged to death; at another he was telling us of the exploiting of the illiterate Negro on the big farms, where, by a process of debt accumulations, an unlucky Negro entrapped is never allowed to escape and becomes practically a serf or peon. If he wishes

to leave he can do so only by night, leaving everything behind him. Or, again, that a Negro in certain districts can not buy a railway ticket to the North. We put the question to ourselves: If so genial a man as Cash Jones was conscious, as he was, of the racial differences, what must be the venom and the hate of thousands, not so genial, who are better educated but still as subject, despite their education, to the meanest of the white population? A tremendous tension marks at present the forces acting on the coloured people, the one conciliatory, the other exasperated; which will dominate?

However, Mr. Jones himself glowed at our presence in his house. But even Cash and his sharp wife did not interest us as much as the problem of those two enigmatic women, sitting and quivering in the kitchen. Was it hate that emanated from them or was it fear or was it even a superior disgust for people like ourselves who would go "visitin' in a cullud man's house"?





## CHAPTER XV

### "DOWN DE ROAD AROUN' DE BEND"

It is but fair that America, which has striven so hard to out-rival the world in all kinds of the gigantic, has also the Stone Mountain fiasco, possibly the greatest monument to ineptitude yet produced. Eight hundred thousand dollars have so far been spent on what was to be the greatest piece of stone carving on earth, but which has so far achieved no more than a hole in the rock. The South was determined to have its own monument, more magnificent than that northern one of the Statue of Liberty. Lee and his generals were to ride across the face of a granite mountain, in a frieze one thousand feet long and seven hundred feet high.

Financial and artistic ineptitude, or worse, have clogged the prosecution of this grandiose project. After twelve years of dynamiting and drilling, the chosen artist's work in turn has been blasted down, and of it no more remains than a pile of rock shards which remind one of the walrus and the carpenter:

"If seven maids with seven mops  
Swept it for half a year. . . ."

Five years will be needed to clear away the evidence of Mr. Borglum's tremendous failure, and faithful and optimistic Southerners have already contributed nearly \$200,000 to build a Temple of Fame on this spot. But they must sweep up the chippings first.

We turned sadly away from Stone Mountain and set off to look for another and more pleasing phenomenon of Southern art, a blind guitarist to whom we had been recommended by the young man of the gramophone company. We had the wrong address, but that matters little in Georgia if you are on the track of a local notoriety. They could all tell us where Riley Puckett had gone to, and the town was on our general way, as we were merely steering from one probable interest to another.

Amongst the small verandaed houses of a Southern Suburbia we found Mr. Puckett, rocking to and fro in a chair, while a young man sprawling on a hammock pored over the pages of an old song book which was printed in the "shape note" system.

The guitar player turned his blind face and blank eye sockets upon us and heard out our self-introduction without change of expression. Then he sat for a long time rocking, his head on his chest as though asleep. We began to wonder how we might break down the barrier of his sightlessness. We were conscious that the blind man, in the fashion of the South, was not welcoming our intrusion. But by chattering to the young man with the shape note book, and then to the blind man's pretty little wife, we managed to arouse Mr. Puckett's curiosity concerning my Spanish-made guitar.

I will not pass upon the Atlanta booster's claim for American violins, but I can vouch that America makes probably

the best commercial guitars of modern times. The makers have selected features from both the Italian and Spanish models and have simplified the strutting of the soundboard. Only the best Spanish instruments can surpass these American guitars, which is in a way surprising, for the amount of guitar playing in the States cannot compare with that in the Southern and South Eastern countries of Europe.

Mr. Puckett was almost the only good guitar player that we have heard in America. He had surmounted his handicap brilliantly, having further invented his own method of playing. If his art lacked the richness and variety of the Spanish, the lack was due to his environment and not to any lack of skill. But his wide popularity was due not entirely to his quality of a pure instrumentalist; even the fiddle players supplement their melodies with what are called dance songs such as:

Great big nigger laying in de bed,  
Heels cracked open like shortnin' bread;  
Do love good shortnin',  
Shortnin',  
Do love good shortnin' bread.

Mr. Puckett had a tenor voice, strangely contrasted with the square cut and rough appearance of the player. As a dance singer and vocal entertainer his presence at parties all over the State was in great request. His wife drove the car, and almost by sheer luck had we found them at home. Some five nights a week Mr. Puckett played somewhere or other, for with the coming of the car no distance could daunt him; he would go a hundred and fifty miles as soon as three. Mrs. Puckett protested that his popularity was wearing her out; she would rather be a housekeeper than a chauffeur, and had neither time nor strength for both.

We played them some Spanish duets which moved Mr.

Puckett to retort with a pair of American jigs; then, with intention, I sang the "Raggle-Taggle Gypsies" and brought out from the blind man its American equivalent:

Black Jack Davy come ridin' by.  
He sang so loud and lovely,  
He sang so loud, he sang so clear,  
He charmed the pretty lady.

Then the guitarist added an old dance song called "Ida Red."

Ida Red, Ida Blue,  
I got stuck on Ida too.  
Down de road aroun' de ben',  
Ain't got a letter I can't tell when.  
Ask little Ida to be my beau,  
She run at me with a goose neck hoe. . . .

But his wife despised these songs. She wanted to hear him sing the old sentimental ballads of twenty years back, "Sweet Marie," "I'll be with you when the roses bloom again," "She's only a bird in a gilded cage," "Underneath the mellow moon," and so on. We had not expected to find such a sentiment still alive in English-speaking lands. That the older folk songs should have survived is intelligible, because of their naïve art and real quality; but that the sentimental ballad of twenty years ago still has its loving public, in spite of the developments of jazz, the phonograph and the radio, was not only surprising but quite stimulating.

Some neighbours stopped to listen as we sat playing on the cottage stoop; old men with long mountain mustaches and slouch hats contrasted with the most modern of silk frocked flappers, fashionably bobbed with carefully plastered ear curls, thickly powdered and their scarlet painted lips hard cupid's bows—village dames exhaling all the exotic quality

which the least of these Southern girls not only desires but, to a large degree, possesses.

Jo drew to one side with Mrs. Puckett and, coming as we had come, straight from the almost hopeful atmosphere of the coloured girls' seminary, she tried here too to test these white villagers in their Negro reaction. Mrs. Puckett shivered at the very name.

‘‘They're awful folk,’’ she declared. ‘‘I tell you we white women hereabouts don't dare go about alone at all, even though we manage to keep them niggers in order by lynching one now and again. Though the trouble is that some bad white girls get so vicious that they will actually go with these niggers—’’

She told a horrible story of a perverted girl who at last, in the progress of her degeneracy, took a Negro lover and by some carelessness had a coloured baby. The name of the Negro was forced from the girl, with the result that both child and father were summarily murdered. Even though in this case the girl was the chief culprit, and the Eve of the poor black Adam, she was merely ostracised, and went away to join the old profession in some big town.

By the time we had been with them an hour and a half we had got so far into the good graces of our hosts that they urged us to stay with them the week. This generosity seems typical of Southern manners. At first showing a cold exterior, steeled with suspicion, they will change into the freest hospitality can the barrier be but broken down. It was predicted that we would enjoy the hospitable atmosphere of the South so much, but without definite introductions to persons of weight in the communities it seems nearly impossible to excite this hospitality. To the stranger lacking that introduction, the natural attitude is repelling and unsympathetic. For the casual traveller in humanities the South is not what it is popularly represented to be. A little more



exterior warmth and a little less of the famed interior generosity would make the road easier. And this opinion is not drawn solely from our unique experience but has been correlated with the accounts of many another traveller.

At last we had to say good-bye to the blind guitarist and his little wife. The red road led us southward. Negro cabins became rougher and poorer, and the distances from place to place wider. There was almost no provision for the motorist now, except in the villages; no places of refreshment, no gasoline stations, no wayside repair shops. Traffic was reduced to necessity. Negroes were on the road in cars, and sometimes in fine cars, too. As they passed us by they bowed politely to us, even at thirty-five miles an hour apiece. Once we saw a line of cabins set in such ranks that we realized they had been the old slave quarters of a plantation.

In the evening we found a town with a camp ground set in a grove, but very dark. Only one other camper was on the ground, lodged in a homemade old caravan built of canvas and chicken wire. He came forward, peering into the light of our lamp, and steered us to a good place. When we were settled he greeted us in strong German accents:

"Dey charges you twenty-five cents here," he said as a welcome, "an' it's sure the dirtiest place I effer see yet."

As we stood talking to him in the light of our headlights, a small girl appeared out of the darkness and slowly began to turn somersaults round and round the group.

"Dat's de way she does, mine little daughder," said the old German fondly, "effer since she go to de fair and see dem do dat."

On the other side of the road from the camp ground was a small wooden chapel clustered about with cars and, as we were setting up the tent, wild bursts of hymnal song flowed through the doors, competing with the more distant sounds

of a steam calliope from a fair. The mixture of music may be taken as symbolic of the modern South, “Throw out the life line” being drowned by the mechanical blasts from a money-making organ, decked with attractive tinsel and twirling rapidly.

We were driving in the last tent peg as another character joined us. He came through the darkness carrying an old candle lantern and a tall staff. He looked like a reincarnated Diogenes, his clothes reduced to an old shirt and ragged trousers. His hair was rough, his seamed face picturesque in the candle-light. Also, strangely for America, his knobby feet were bare of either shoes or socks. Having given us a cheery good evening, he greeted the German with evident old acquaintance.

“How’s business?” he asked of him.

“Dat’s pooty poor yet,” said the German seriously. “De cotton go so bad de peepul dey joost don’t be able to afford to be sick. But de tobacco look fine, and a goot price too. I guess I do pooty good at last perhaps.”

“One of these yer medicine men he is,” said Diogenes to us. “I guess they does do pretty good too. Mixes up some pink dye in water and sells it for half a dollar.”

“I doan sell dat kind off medicines,” protested the German.

“I knows all about that,” went on Diogenes; “had a coupl’a young fellers here not so many months ago. Stayed here pretty near six weeks they did, and if ever I see a pair of young crooks those was them. Don’t I know? Why, they borreyed my place there to mix their stuff in. Gosh, how they used ter kid about it.”

“It ain’t dat vay I does it,” protested the German. “And you knows dat, Jim, too. I does only de speculating vat de cases may be, and den I sends de particulars to my firm. Ve deals ony in de verry best yerb medicines, made from

de plant, you see. Ī feels dem patients all ofer, finds out how de pains is, and den I sends de particulars to my Boss. Dats de vay I does it. Honest. Dere ain't no bad vork in dat. It's all de gen-u-wine stuff dey gets, sure."

"Aw, a feller don't need your medicines, anyway, Hans,



DIOGENES

if he knows what's the matter with him. See my feet for instance. Know why I don't never wear no shoes? I tell you my feet got so sore on me I couldn't wear no shoes nor get about nor nothing. Well! Think I go paying my money to a doctor? I just used ter boil 'em with fish water, see, water what fish ben boiled in, and as hot as I c'd stand it. Then I wraps 'em in the skin off meat what'd gone smelly,

y'know, rancid, yes, wraps 'em in that. And Go' darn me if they ain't so good now I don't never need to buy me boots. Don't never wear 'em, and a mighty saving it is too."

"Dey is more things vot can cure things than vot is yet found out," agreed the German in no whit astonished by Diogenes' allopathy. "For instance I hear many time of a cure for de janduss, you know ven you turns yellow all ofer, de janduss dey calls it. Vell, dey tells me dat if you gets some tar, erbout half a barrel, see, and if you stands looking down into dat dere tar so's you can see your own shadow like in de tar, and you vatches dat 'bout half a hour every day, dat yellow color in de tar it draw out de yellow color in your face, and de janduss is made goot again. I don't see vy dat shouldn' be true. Deys kinder affinities in dose two colors see, dat de vay it vork. Ony I didn' neffer yet haf de janduss so I neffer git a chance to try it out, myself."

"Well, folks," said Diogenes, "if you wants anything I kin loan to you just come along to the top of the block. I got a kinda junk place up thar. Any help I can give yer, jest say so. G'night."

At the departure of Diogenes, the German also turned to his own caravan, withdrawing his small daughter, who had not ceased to revolve about us on the ground with praiseworthy persistency. The sounds of the distant fair tempted us so that we closed the car and set off along the road past the still chanting chapel. Now that we had turned our backs upon it, we began to realise the fairylike quality of the scene just past the grove of tall-stemmed trees through which our headlights cut two long paths of brilliance—the small genial German medicine-man, his whole being exuding that odd simplicity so apparent in his mind and speech, an innocent charlatan; the barefooted old junk man with his lantern and tall staff and the mocking good-humour of his voice; that indefatigable little elfin girl somersaulting round us; and,



last, out of the darkness which enveloped us with its own moth haunted mystery, the crazy fugue of those two musical competitors, the chapel and the calliope.

The fair was one of the poorest sort; everything in it was just a little more ramshackle than in the superior county shows; the whizzing and racketing mechanisms seemed to hold together by miracle; and in a very short time we had exhausted the interest. However, we passed by the booth of freak animals with its frieze of strange attractions—"The Cow with Two Heads," "The Cat with Six Feet," "The Mermaid," and so on and so on. A big caravan was moored alongside, and on the steps of it sat a young woman. Here Jo loitered and looked wistfully at the caravan so that she attracted the attention of the owner. Then she said to me in a voice so clear that it astonished me:

"I wonder what the inside of such a caravan is like."

The young woman came down the steps and walked slowly forward. She said "Good-evening" in a pleasant quiet voice and then added: "Well, wouldn't you like to see inside our place?"

We were really surprised at the comfort they had contrived inside such a box. It was cosily planned; the bed turned into a daytime divan; there were wicker arm chairs, running water, a parrot swinging in a cage, and a baby in its cradle.

"Oh I just adore this life," said the young woman, "I love our animals and I love moving from place to place. Tired of the road? Never. Perhaps though that's because my mother was a Gypsy. She used to tell fortunes in a little house boat on the Ohio. Carmen, the Gypsy, she called herself. She floated up and down the river tying up at any place that suited her fancy. I guess I got bitten with the wander bug when I was a kid.



“Have you no home at all?” asked Jo, “except this caravan?”

“Indeed, yes,” answered the young woman proudly. “My husband isn’t a Gypsy at all, and we have a very good home back in Ohio State. We’ve got an uncle living there now, and we all bury there.”

Thinking of burying she leaned sadly over the sleeping baby.

“He isn’t so strong as I’d wish,” she said. “Don’t get up his weight like he should. Do you know this palmistry stuff? Do you believe in it? Of course I learned it from mother. Used to do it too. And I got lots of friends who know it as well. They all tell me that I shan’t never raise that baby. But I can’t read things the way they say they do. I don’t believe you can really tell fortunes from a baby’s hand so young as that, do you?”

Jo told her that she too had studied palmistry. She was convinced that nothing of true value could be drawn from so young a child’s hand. Many people just wanted to show off.

“That’s the way I think, too,” said the anxious mother. “But, say, I don’t think it is really right for them folks to tell me those sort of things even if they think they see them, do you?”

She then took us gratefully into the animal exhibition free. The freaks were all poor abortive monstrosities stuffed or kept in bottles. Otherwise the zoological exhibit was of ordinary beasts—’possums, coons and woodchucks, little honey bears grumbling in their sleep and some imported monkeys—only the skunk was missing.

“What a pity we are not staying longer,” I said, “my wife would love to make pictures of the animals.”

“Are you artists?” she exclaimed. “Can you really paint

animals? Aren't you staying much longer? Why our banners are looking just awful old. Perhaps you could repaint them for us?"

The prospect of repainting all those freaks would have delighted us, but we had barely time to get round to New York. We were forced to refuse two thrilling invitations in the same day. Confound time limits!

Thirsting, we moved to a stall selling that popular drink Coca-Cola. It was apparently owned by a fat woman in a white overall; the word *Coca-Cola* flourished in red embroidery across her bosom. Perched in a saucy fashion on her bobbed hair was a white cap with a similar legend. As we sucked the fizzy stuff through the artificial straws we entered into conversation with her and found to our surprise that she was no inconsiderable traveller.

"Liverpool, yes," she exclaimed heartily, "yes I didn't care so much for Liverpool, we stayed there at the Majestic Hotel, quite good though; and London, of course it's foggy, but we stayed at the Monopole, very nice; and at Paris we stopped at the Continongtal as you call it there, a very nice hotel; and then at Venice of course we went to the . . ."

She led us a dance of the European hotels and at each new name of magnificence she drew herself up and stared Jo in the eye. Each time Jo returned her gaze gravely, but just under the epigastric fossa, where rages brew, a little pain of fury was beginning to foment. "Pop," Jo was thinking, "mere pop. She can do all that on pop; and only gets hotels and vanity out of a whole trip round Europe; and that nice Zoo girl has probably only just enough to get along on." However she suppressed her foolish feelings of anger and blurted out:

"Then this sort of business must pay very well, doesn't it?" I trod on her foot, but too late.

"This!" cried the Coca-Cola woman bridling, "I hope you

don't think—Of course I don't do *this* for a business—hardly! Why, I am the President of the local chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy! This sort of business! Why, this is merely a stall for collecting funds! We don't work for pay—I should think not indeed!”

We apologised as best we might for our unpardonable mistake.

Next morning we awoke early. No superior of the camp had yet appeared to ask for our twenty-five cents rent. The place indeed merited the German's criticism; the crude toilet arrangements were the worst kept we had yet encountered; that the sanitary authorities in a country like America allowed the place to exist surprised us. So we decided in place of active criticism we would merely avoid paying for luxuries we had not enjoyed.

The tent was tied to the running board and the engine was started up when Diogenes came up with his slow slouch.

“I'm jest off ter look up some traps I got down,” he said. “’Tain't exactly the proper season yit, but I don't care for that. I don't worry none about them things.” Indeed he looked a proper old poacher. “This here place is a fair scandal ain't it?” he went on. “Why they used ter make me guardian here, but I got so ashamed asking folks for their money I used ter let 'em slip away if they wanted to, so, what between one thing and another, I resigned. No, sir, it ain't my nature trying to make folks pay for what they hasn't had. . . .”

We have not decided whether his last speech were not a sly blessing on our conduct.



## CHAPTER XVI

### A NEGRO ISLAND

SKIMMING Savannah—since towns are not often spiritually profitable to mere wayfarers—we wheeled northwards once more along an avenue of palms. We had reached the nadir of our trip. Florida lay a few miles to the south, but we turned our backs upon it; these United States were too immense, and what was Florida anyway except a gathering place of specimens from all those states we had passed through already or would pass through going up. We were but cream skimmers, deliberately tasting the variety of the land and its multiple humanities.

Northward we turned, soon passing out of the area of cultivation and commerce, coming back to the old image of the South which Southern ambition is striving to press back into the definite past. For the old image of the South is one of swamps, with water standing round the roots of the

trees, festooned by gray air-born moss hanging thick from the branches until it curtains the forest overhead and forms a dense awning against the Southern sun, making a great dim-lit mosque wherein the air stews with exhalations of fungus on the vapour. The new image of the South is one where the cotton mill and the fertiliser plant have brought radios and second-hand Fords to the poor whites who have acquired at least the humble ambition of working as hard as the next man in order to keep a wife socially content.

Yes, here were swamps enough, and causeways built across miles and miles of swamp, the old South still in its strength. South Carolina has not yet definitely ceased to dream of the Civil War and to ponder on what might have been, rather than on what is. Here indeed we had come out of the radius of the civilizing ice cream; here also pop cost six cents a bottle instead of five and every packet of cigarettes carried two cents of tax.

At Yermasee, right turn for Beaufort, and at Beaufort, over the bridge to St. Helena's Island. But we went through Beaufort slowly, for it was a charming place, slumbrously content where, except for the presence of a few garages and gas-pumps, the crinoline and the sandal would even today be a costume more suitable than the short skirt and high heels. Though the big cement bridge over the strait is modern enough.

However, once you pass the end of the bridge, all touch of today is left behind. Here is the strange Island of St. Helena. At the end of the bridge the white man's dominion ceases. For sixty years no white man has owned essential property in this place. Deserted by its white owners, early in the Civil War, on the appearance of a Federal fleet, it was sold to the ex-slaves on the excuse of unpaid taxes.



"Flat robbery!" cries the South. We are not judges but tale bearers.

The evidences of a careful cultivation were spread out on every hand. Here the long-staple Sea Island cotton grows, so valuable nowadays for tire making. The roads were untended dirt tracks, as little traffic other than that of the inhabitants passes this way. Long arms of the sea cut the road and there were high, ill kept embankments and bridges; but the place where bridge and embankment joined was often so battered by the elements and so disjointed that the passage across with a car usually looked perilous and was always difficult.

Indeed it was not easy to find at first the Penn School to which we were bound, and we wandered wide before we were guided to the turning which led into an avenue of the old, moss hung oaks so characteristic of the big plantations of the past.

Here the two ladies in charge received us with a welcome Northern in its spontaneity, Southern in its completeness. And here too we experienced the only moments in which we could feel without any intrusion the quality of America's past. This may be thought a strange statement, because nothing of this kind ever existed in the past of the South. This was a slave holding where now free Negroes live, freed not only from their bonds of slavery but also from those subtler bonds of white disdain. We felt there the quality of quiet, the quality of Romance in those great groves of oaks hung with pendent moss which half hid the school buildings; it was a quality of simplicity in those ex-slaves, who had grown up neither under terrorisation nor the need of bombast springing from consciousness of inferiority. Indeed so much was the naïveté of the inhabitants shielded, even from the intrusion of our curiosity, that the Principal dissuaded us from entering one of the Island chapels where

the old Negro sincerity of worship and song is still naturally preserved.

On this quiet island the untroubled Negroes, under the enthusiastic tutelage of these two Northern ladies, are testing their capacity for social development. The doctor is coloured, as are the other teachers and the pastors. The black nurse has her underling midwives, all trained in the latest modernities of technique, and approved of by examinations. In fact she pressed on us with pride, as a souvenir, a booklet containing the "Midwives' Questionnaire." Jo was introduced at the end of a midwives' meeting, and told them a few facts of women's state amongst European peasant communities; facts which could give them good cause for self-gratulatory comment. They breathed in her words with awed interest, and at the conclusions of her paragraphs intoned as a response her last sentence in sign of understanding. Their black faces framed in white caps nodded to the rhythm of her talk, and when she left the room she heard her final words murmured over and over as though they would taste again the savour of this news from a distant and less civilised Europe.

She also sat under the big oaks on the school grounds, trying to sketch the children. Whatever one's attitude to the Negro may be no one can deny that he has a gesture, a sense of grace which, when he is not being grotesque, is almost aristocratic; something perhaps inherited from generations of ancestors who had so far conquered the jungle that they might consider themselves, in their limited spheres, the lords of creation. The movements of these unhampered children had that kind of a grace; but to draw them was another matter. Even here the imposed values of a foreign idea of beauty had penetrated.

If Jo drew a child so that she looked far more Caucasian than she really was, the other girls crowded up to pose; but

if, hunting for the true character of her moods, she insisted on the negroid qualities, the children hung back and with difficulty could be persuaded. She had found a similar difficulty in sketching the girls at Atlanta. This might not have been entirely due to the workings of vanity and prepossession alone. It is a fact that we learn much about nature from art; that is, we learn to observe things in nature by seeing them first depicted in art. These Negro children had never seen the Negro in art, except as a half-grotesque being. All their ideas of beauty were borrowed from the covers of popular journals, on which white girls represented sexual attraction. So they had naturally taken the white features as their standard of beauty and could have no standard of their own other than this borrowed one. In connection with this, Miss C—— told us a fact of almost pathetic significance. She had formerly wished to give away some dolls and, thinking it an excellent idea, had a set of black babies made especially for her children. But at first no child would take a black doll. They had been bred on white dolls and nothing but white skin and golden hair could merit their childish affection. However, by degrees the black dolls found loving homes, with the result that now the natural demand for dolls of a correct racial color is higher than the supply.

The Penn School believed in practise more than in precept; since in all simple communities seeing is believing. How, for instance, could you inculcate the theory of the rotation of crops but by rotating them? So it had an experimental farm, taught by practical exposition. It had shoemakers who would renovate any old boot not wholly broken backed, mechanics to explain the use of agricultural machines, and it had preserved one old art imported from Africa unchanged—basket making. It had been brought over from Africa by one man and had been preserved by his son. The Principal decided to use him as a teacher. At

first a class was got together for the girls, but the girls seemed incapable of making good baskets; they came out lopsided or irregular. Later, boys were tried; and they took to basket making with a right good will and seemingly natural talent. Here's the odd thing about the matter: We believe that basket making in Africa is an occupation sacred to the male of the tribe. Compare this with a discovery we made later in Philadelphia.

At the present moment the future of the Island is in the balance. These people have advanced thus far in the quiet which has surrounded them. The separation from the land has guarded them from bad influences, and has allowed them to develop so that their faces have an expression very different from that of the Negroes in other parts of the States. They meet your glance with straight and candid eyes; there is no artificiality in them. Why should there be? They have had a chance to grow into human beings. But now, in the process of development, the bridge has come. Real estate companies are trying to buy the coast land from the owners; Savannah lies to the south, Charleston to the north; this island would make an ideal summer colony for both cities. Already pressure to sell is being exerted on the Negro owners; and immediate money looks so big to anyone who has never had much. This experiment, which should have at least five or six generations to prove of real value, may probably founder during the next; for how can the simple poor man see his own advantage in an idea, or how can he resist the subtle temptations urged on him by one trained in guile, a realtor who scents a new location?

We know this: that St. Helena's Island, amongst all our memories of a varied America, will remain one of the most vivid. The noble avenue draped with its clinging moss stretches to right and left; behind is the Principal's house

surrounded by its wide netted porches; before me are the buildings of the school with the spry children dashing about in play under the spreading boughs of the venerable oaks. The afternoon sun strikes down and edges all that strange hanging moss with gold. And, athwart the sun-stripes laid across the avenue, comes an old, fat country woman, seated high in a two wheeled buggy. A broad chip hat shades her round black face but does not hide the glint of two big circular golden ear-rings pendent to her shoulders. As she comes forward she cries in a rich Negro voice to her steed, which is no mule but a small, light, trotting ox bound into the shafts with a yoke. Where else in America can you find such a chariot?





## CHAPTER XVII

### CHARLOTTE AND THE HOUSE OF GOD

PEOPLE of our calibre suffer more than most from the human gramophone. Somebody makes a statement; it is automatically recorded, reproduced and re-reproduced until few would dare deny it or even open their eyes to see if it is really true. The human gramophone says it; therefore it is so. Witness the legend surrounding Charleston, South Carolina: "the most beautiful and characteristic town of the old South."

Undoubtedly, in the fury of change which rules in America, Charleston is remarkable, for it has resisted change; but the European traveller is not going to be much thrilled by what has merely shown this quality, any more than the American coming from New York is going to be thrilled by the twelve stories or so of our London Queen Anne's Mansions. What we asked ourselves was, could Charleston really be a true example of an old Southern town? If we had found Charleston in Louisiana we might have been unamazed, for really it had as Frenchified an air as a suburb of Versailles

or any of the small French towns which had felt the influence of the later Louis. It smelt of the Faubourg St. Germain. No; if we were asked to point to an old Southern town redolent of the past we would pick Beaufort, for all its wooden unpretentiousness.

But perhaps it is not fair to write so discourteously of Charleston. Towns really are shy creatures; they give up their intimacies reluctantly and, although the Greek at whose chophouse we lunched hated the place with all the power of his Greek soul, and longed with aimless passion for the amenities of Skowhegan, where his happiest days had been spent, we must resist bias. Boom on, ye gramophones, uncontradicted.

Yet Charleston was not without profit. It was not our fate to go about gathering impressions from only one side. The seminary in Atlanta had been balanced by Mrs. Puckett and other roadside acquaintances; now St. Helena's Island was to be corrected by a Daughter of the South, one who had been bred from the strain of the old plantation owners and who felt in her very bones all the bitterness of the past. We carry weapons for neither side, brandish no propaganda; but no arguments of the most rabid Southerner could have revealed to us the true Negro question so much as one night spent with Stephen Graham at Small's Paradise, New York City.

We had happened into Small's on a fortunate evening; the members of the Club of the Monarch Elks were holding their annual celebration. Huge buck Negroes, in the full panoply of hired evening dress, their lapels gay with insignia and bright ribbons, were making merry on lavish gin. Prohibition did not exist there. Wedged in perspiring couples on the packed dance floor, while the braying orchestra sobbed and groaned in an ecstasy of syncopation, they

danced, or rather squirmed, slowly round till I could think of nothing better than a barrel of pickled herrings suddenly endowed with life and passion. There we saw the Jungle in evening dress, and voodoo in silk stockings. Truly it was not more vile than a cabaret of whites in the same state and of the same social rank. Such is not the point. What stood out in that release of repressions was not deeper depravity but an intense difference.

There we had felt a direct emotional reaction to the coloured question which is not amenable to argument. Whenever we suggested that the Negroes had also a point of view, the Southerners clamoured that we did not understand; and yet I think that we had understood something.

The news that we had come straight to her from St. Helena's Island roused our Southern lady to almost frenzy. "Robbery! Thieves!" she cried. "Yankee school marms ruining the happy-go-lucky Negro with the rotation of crops. Why, lots of white farmers have not yet learned to rotate their crops. Should then the Negro have that right?"

That is not exactly what she said, but that is what she meant.

"You are standing with your feet in a bog," she asserted.

We were but seeking a calm exposition of the Southern point of view, and to get it we ventured argument. Naturally she could be no more placid over the matter than an *Emigré* could have been placid over the victories of Napoleon. She claimed that the Negro had been better off under slavery; which is possibly true. Would not men for the most part be better off under a beneficent form of slavery? For, indeed, when we do get any freedom we generally condemn ourselves to some other slavery, such as that of collective opinion, for instance. We are all slaves in fact, but that one form of human ownership, although perhaps not even

the most oppressive of slaveries to which we must submit, is yet the most intolerable to human sensibilities.

The afternoon was drawing on, and we had not found a camp ground. We wished to take leave, for it is unpleasant to search the countryside in the dark, not knowing where one's bed shall be found. But our hostess would not let us go, dinning her sermon into our tired ears until with pardonable rudeness we dragged ourselves away under the bombardment of syllables, scrambled into the "Hearse" and fled the town.

She had kindly proposed to take us to an old plantation on the morrow to meet a typical old Southern Mammy. But previously she had said that one could not trust any evidence which the pro-Negroes might have gathered, since a characteristic of the black race was that it would say whatever was acceptable.

We hurried off, scouring the gas stations for news of a camp ground, and at last heard of a dubious camp some six or seven miles in the country where we could perhaps put up a tent. Camping has not attained popularity in the South. We found a refreshment stall in a small wood set with rustic tables. The place was overrun with flappers in riding breeches who were spending their money on quantities of ice cream and barbecue sandwiches. One or two were half-intoxicated, and the rest were spirited up. Their hilarity was hectic. But at last they crowded into a pair of expensive cars and shot away through the night. Their screaming repartee faded, and we were left to the dialogue between the stall owner and his coloured aid—an enigmatic duet in the Hemingway style concerning one Jake:

"But d'jer mean ter say that Jake—?"

"Sho I does—"

"But what did'e want ter—?"

"Well, dat's de way it seemed ter him, I spec—"



"But d'jer beleieve as Jake reely—?"

"Why, Boss, if he hadn't t'ought dat way I kain't suppose as—" And so on *ad lib* till sleep took charge of our unenlightened understanding.

The next morning dawned greyly. We packed up as though something weighed on our minds. Our appointment with the Southern lady was for ten o'clock. I studied the map. By then we might be well on the way to Charlotte. We weighed the value of a Negro Mammy's evidence, given under the eye of that implacable patriot—and we feared it would still find us with our feet wretchedly stuck in the bog of unconvinced enquiry. I looked at Jo and Jo looked at me.

"What if we didn't—?" shone in unison from each eye. We steered into Charleston, but her place was tight locked, with a gate of iron grill in true French style. We could only toss a note through the gate and trust to luck. Then, with a sigh of satisfaction, we made again for the open country, only staying for a few minutes to make a sketch of the great square with its surrounding of tiny houses, its needle pointed church and its first desecrating skyscraper.

On the motor maps issued by the gasoline companies the modernized roads are marked in solid red, and what are called "improved roads" with a spotted line. Improved roads are roads formed by working a little gravel into the natural earth; they are kept flat by planing down the surfaces from time to time with broad steel grading machines, but the times are far apart, and in between the balloon tires wear away the surface into a curious wave formation called "washboarding." Over these roads cars jiggle as though they had St. Vitus's dance, and one's body takes part in the wholesale shudder. Travelling is unpleasant, and in dry weather a haze of dust hangs over the



road; in wet, it is so muddy as to be often dangerous, sometimes impossible. Such is the "improved" road of the poorer states. South Carolina has many of them. Combined with the poor quality of the roads their intense loneliness made travelling in an old car anxious work, for if under this consistent shaking some part should break, one might be stranded for a long time before help would come; and even then, the passer-by, frightened by the solitude, might refuse to stop. The decoy accident is a common ruse of the road thief, and many a man halting in charity has been slugged over the head and tossed into the ditch unconscious.

At Camden, about half way, we stopped at an open barbecue booth to lunch. There were seats on either side and we used the nearest bench. The booth keeper looked at us sourly. "Git over the other side," he growled. We did not at first understand. "D'ja wanta eat with niggers?" he snapped. We saw then that one side was reserved for black, one for white. Yet it seemed to us inconsistent that a man who would not permit his superiority to lunch at a Negro's side would yet condescend to be his servant. As we were eating, a man sauntered up with a sack on his back. From the shape of the bulges in the sacking we judged it to be full of bottles.

"Want any this morning, Jim?" he asked.

"Naw, I guess I don't just now," replied the booth keeper. The man went slowly with his burden down the street.

"Is he still doing that?" asked another diner.

"Ya, he keeps right at it," said the booth keeper, "makes a pretty good kind of stuff too."

"I heard he'd quit his cousin," said the other. "Weren't they down in the swamp back a piece together?"

"Ya," said the booth keeper, "but they split c'mp'ny. His

cousin kept right on in that place, but he took another pardner; he's located a bit further out. Makes the best stuff of the two though. His cousin'd a done better if he'd kep' right along 'er him."

"That's a fact," said the other. "When the stuff's good there ain't no difficulty in passing it out."

We watched the pot-still bootlegger stroll carelessly across the road with his sack full of whiskey. A policeman at the corner watched him pass; they waved to each other and we remembered how Americans had often smiled at a story we used to tell, of a smugglers' inn of Majorca which the police warned that they were going to raid as a surprise in two days. Naïveté at home is always so much less picturesque than naïveté abroad.

Late that afternoon I made a mistake. Having discovered the interesting fact that the spring controlling the air control on the carburetor was weak, and that the vibration of the car caused it to screw slowly open, I had in addition found that by leaving this unremedied I could effect a saving in gasoline-mileage. So wishing to test the mileage distance, I was taking the car as far as she would go until the last gallon of spirit. Unluckily, I misread the mileage, so that on a slight incline the engine suddenly began to falter, coughed, spluttered, started again but finally came to a full stop. I had run the tank empty. And there we were, stuck on a lonely road. For several miles behind we knew that there was no station; and how far in front the loneliness stretched we had no means of knowing, except that Charlotte was some six miles away.

I do not know whether we had acquired an exaggerated idea of the danger of these lonely roads, but we had heard so many stories of holdups and general lawlessness that I was afraid to walk on and leave Jo in charge of the car in the

falling dusk. Not that any one would condescend to steal such a car, but he might imagine that the well filled interior contained something of value.

So there we sat, feeling uncommonly foolish, while Jo gave me a lot of commonsense opinions about trying experiments on deserted roads. At last a car came into sight but refused to halt at our signal; a second treated us in the same way. Did I look particularly villainous? I wondered. However at last there came a car full of Negroes. It was a disreputable old ruin, worth nobody's looting, so the occupants stopped without hesitation; but at the tale of our difficulty the driver said he hadn't a drop of gasoline to spare. Two more cars of Negroes and a car full of white workmen stopped in turn, but not one was able to give assistance, though I offered to pay for the gas. "Churls," I thought savagely. The next car, however, consented to extract a gallon from its tank and explained the refusal of the others.

"Yer see," the man said, "we working kinda fellers fill up our tanks on Saturday night and that's what we allow ourselves for the week. Well, we get to know the running of our cars pretty well, so on a Saturday, like this, I'll bet you every one of them fellers has just about enough gas left in the tank to get him home. If he helped you out he'd stick on the road himself, or be liable to. I was sick a day this week so I've got that day's gas still in my tank. That's how it is."

A thin rain had begun to fall and night was well down before we said good-bye. We started off, but the raindrops so spotted the windshield that I could hardly see the roadside. However, we made our way at a cautious speed for a mile and a half. Here we met another car which sprang such a dazzle amongst the raindrops on the glass that I was able to judge the road only by the actions of the other car as it approached. Suddenly we shot over the bank.

On a Coney Island switchback, even though prepared for the rush, one's heart is almost swept from the body and a mock, irresistible panic grips one. If, so prepared, the expected fall can thus clutch the emotions, what must it be when in the night your solid car, without warning, leaps from under you and careens swooping with you into downward space? The brain and heart stop aghast; you do not even question; you do not even think "What?" or "Why?", only "It has happened!" And during an amazing period of suspense while falling you feel carried along speedily, bewildered by the abruptness of the rough movement, and wait expectant for the answer to an unthought question. While your body is being swung about, jerked, buffeted and finally flung forward, your mind is shocked into passivity.

The windshield splintered as Jo first plunged through it; the steering wheel hit my ribs so hard that I expected them to be bent or broken. Motion stopped outside with a crash and began furiously within us; our hearts, thudding, took up once more the interrupted rhythm of life with a tremendous crash. Then only could we cry "What?" and query ourselves back into reality, a mere five-foot ditch with the "Hearse's" nose bedded deep into the soil and long grasses. Confound the rain!

At that moment a car full of Negroes came up. They halted and, in the awe struck tones which accidents always evoke, asked:

"Anybody hurt?"

They proffered assistance, but the car was too deeply embedded in the bank for anything less than a crane. So while they drew up at the side of the road to await events I walked a hundred yards to where a house glimmered through the night.

A young man peered at me through the door.

"Accident? In the ditch? Telephone? Sure."

He rang up a garage in Charlotte and told them of the mess; then he accompanied me to the scene.

"I've seen many a car in that ditch," he said, "and never any got out of themselves but one, a Flivver. It was a nice moonlight night, and people was just going out for drives, and we got so many together that we fair lifted it out in our arms.

As we went I asked:

"What do you think of the Negroes hereabouts?"

"Well, I'll tell you what *I* think," he answered, "when a feller ain't got nothing, and can't get nothing, it ain't surprising if he *is* a bum, see? But if a feller can get something and does get something and makes himself a home and works good, why then it ain't natural to call him a bum. And I tell you that I knows some of them fellers who are pretty good workmen, and make good wages, and have good homes; yes, good as I have. And I don't see I've got any right to call them fellers bums. That's just how *I* feel about it."

By the time we returned to the spot half a dozen cars of coloured workmen had drawn up in line on the other side of the road. The misty rain was still falling, so Jo had been compelled to creep into the car, where she clung to the edge of the window, and from that position gave reassuring answers to the succession of deep toned enquiries;

"Anyone hurt?"

One old Negro elevated his hands towards the drizzling skies and exclaimed joyfully;

"Sho' de Lawd do protect his own; sho' de Lawd do protect his own."

Sure of their strength, they proposed to lift the car out by main force; but we preferred to wait for the crane, which presently arrived, adjusted a chain about the back axle, and hauled the "Hearse" from its undignified situation. Apparently no deep harm had been done except that it was so



clotted with earth that it looked more like a resurrection than a funeral. Having thanked all our willing aids, we took the road to Charlotte which we reached without further adventures.

Southern camp grounds have this feature preferable to the Northern—they are usually set in a wood, so that loitering is pleasant. The Northern camping places, with a regiment of uniform cabins, like soldiers guarding a parade ground, do not invite much dawdling or gossip; they partake of the Northern character—300 miles a day, arrive late at night, up with the dawn, “Come along! Don’t waste time even on a holiday.” Yet even Northerners gossip more easily in the South. Here the cabins were less martial, they looked like a rather ragged regiment. In one was lodged a traveling salesman whose line was small gadgets for cars.

We were first attracted to the family by his wife’s method of dealing with a fowl. Having bought it alive, she gripped the doomed bird by the head, swung it rapidly in a circle until, the neck parting under the strain, the body whirled off amongst the trees. The method of dispatch was summary and neat, but to us a little startling. I don’t know why. The salesman tried to make us buy blinkers for our headlights, but we assured him that our lights were already myopic and blinkers on them would render them wholly blind. He had other little contrivances of different grades of ingenuity, but the one that pleased us the most was his burglar alarm.

Guaranteed to protect any car, from pilfering of any nature, it was so planned that, should a prospective thief touch the prepared car in any part, your faithful alarm would begin at once to shout lustily for help.

“Just put your hand on my spare tire,” the salesman said.

I did so and at once the car began to bawl:

"He'p . . . he'p . . . he'p . . . he'p. . . ." Like a hysterical puppy with a trodden tail—disconcerting enough for a thief who prefers to do his work in unobserved quiet! There was a flavour of quaint humour about the contrivance which won our fancy, though the salesman was quite unhumourously practical. He lectured us on the obvious advantages, exhibiting with untirable persistence how it rendered a car inviolable, since no burglar would venture to ride off on a car which was all the while screaming for assistance.

"You have endowed it with a funny bone," we said; "you have made it ticklish."

We pointed out that as for ourselves we had an even better protection in possessing a car which no thief with a spark of vanity would be seen stealing. Which he admitted was true. He stopped trying to sell us the alarm but chatted pleasantly, telling us that he had first taken to the road in the old buggy days and ever since had led the life of the Wandering Jew. Apart from this fact, he had little to say. His observations were confined to selling prospects. Humanity, except as a buying animal, had small interest for him.

However, in one day the whimsicality of his apparatus palled on us. The mechanical shrieks punctuated the whole afternoon. You were never sure whether he had turned it on or off; and so sensitive was it that even brushing against the machine would make it clamorously hysterical. His wife tried to get out some condiments with which to flavour the centrifugally slain hen and to her disgust she too set the alarm into action.

But when, before daybreak, the car suddenly began to shout for help, and we all rushed from bed to seize the thief, only to find that an amazed dog had jumped on the running board, we began to think that perhaps this alarm was not

socially perfect. A burglar alarm should, after all, have perspicacity.

The next day we received a call from a young Journalist to whom we had a letter of introduction. Here was true Southern hospitality, for he carried us then and there from the camp and lodged us in his house, where we at once dived into the luxury of a sit down bath.

And in the evening he took us to the House of God.

A mass of Negroes clustered in the darkened street. On the sidewalk, which mounted high above the road on a clay bank was a booth selling the cheaper refreshments of American life—soft drinks, chewing gum, bars of candy, plug tobacco, peanuts, cigarettes, cigars, and ice cream stood almost at the door of the huge wooden chapel. But we did not realize how huge the chapel was till we had pushed a way through the Negro throng and had passed the doors. The place was like an immense timber barn, empty of timber. A hundred posts supported the roof, which floated in darkness above the wide shades of the hanging lamps. These lamps shone down on another kind of darkness, the clustered darkness of almost a thousand negroes massed on extending benches about a central dais, on which were a few chairs and an old harmonium. Over the heads of the audience, a large placard hung from the roof with the inscription:

### THIS IS THE HOUSE OF GOD

We had entered during a pause. The great audience was silent, though here and there a faint moan rose from the benches. Women with pale blue diagonal sashes inscribed "Usher" escorted us up an aisle to the "White Folks' " bench. No one took overt notice of our presence. We were

on one side of the dais, almost hidden by the harmonium; a choir in two rows had its back to us. At right angles facing the front of the dais was a long line of ushers, in their white dresses and blue scarves; behind them, row upon row of solemn black faces stared towards the platform.

As our dazed reaction to all that intent multitude passed, we began to note other and less immediately obvious features. The floor was deeply bedded with sawdust, and quite suddenly we saw, lying on the sawdust behind a post, the body of an inert girl her arms flung out. A row of worshippers seemed almost unaware that she lay across their feet; she was evidently a common object in the chapel.

Then the service began again, an extemporary prayer, a hymn or two, quietly enough rendered, one or two more prayers and then the sermon. The journalist who accompanied us had told us something of the movement and of its founder. He was a man of Portuguese origin, a race which is often blended with Negro blood. At all events he was dark enough to mix with the Negroes. Having appointed himself a bishop of this new sect he had managed to excite the Negroes to such a pitch that the town authorities had ordered a shutting of the chapel at midnight. After that hour they were forbidden to sing or shout. The owners of house property in the Negro quarters of the town were suffering badly, for the new sect gathered in money from all the enthusiasts in such large quantities that not enough remained to pay the rent.

But the facts had not prepared us for the sermon. The Bishop was not present on this night, but the journalist said he was a man of personality. This present preacher was loud voiced and emphatic; beating himself into a semi-rhythmic hysteria as he warmed to his subject:

“ . . . An’ after he get to de Islan’ of Patmos, yes, bredren, after he inscribe dem here Revelations—wat den?

What den, bredren, I ask you, what den? Nuthin— Ain't dey fin' a tomb to de bressed apostle, I ask you? Ain't dey fin' a tomb? No, Sir, dey ain't. And for why? Dey ain't no tomb—dey ain't no tomb at all. And for why? Why, bredren, ain't dere no tomb at all found? Why, bredren, because dere ain't no tomb to find. No, Lord, You knows dere ain't no tomb to find at all. No tomb—not one stone of a tomb. And why, bredren, why? Bicause dat dere divine Apostle, what lie in Jesus' boosom, ain't never berry. No, bredren, he ain't never berry. He never go down into de tomb. Not he."

"Oh, yess, Praise Gawd! Oh, yess, praise de Lawd! Jesus—Oh, Glory on High—Oh, yess," shouted the congregation.

"What did our bressed Lawd Jesus say to dat dere Apostle? What did he say to him, I ask you? He say, bredren, he say: 'Tarry ye here till I comes again.' Didn' he say just dat? Didn' he 'splain in eggzacly dem words what dat Apostle had got ter do? Didn' he say just dat: 'Tarry ye here till I come again,' ain't dat what he say? Sho' it am. An', bredren, what do dem words sinnerfy? Ain't dere but one meaning to dem, what a blin' man could read? 'Tarry ye here.' What do dat mean? Dat mean only one thing, bredren, only one thing. It mean, 'Stop right here, John;' it mean 'You ain't gotter go away Apostle;' it mean 'You stay right on living on dis bressed Earf till you see me come in Glory.' Dat's what dem words mean, bredren. Dey means just dat and nuffing else; an' who can say dey don't? Dey ain't never fin' no tomb, bredren; dey ain't never find no tomb. Dat's sho'. Dey ain't no tomb to find, bredren, because dat bressed Apostle ain't never need berry, no, he ain't never need berryin', he's jes' awaitin' right here on dis Earf, right here on dis Earf, waitin' here, waitin' for de Glory, yes, bredren, for de Glory he's waitin'—" "Oh, yess!



Glory—Glory—” shouted the excited congregation. “Jesus is coming—Holy Fader. Oh, yess, Sholy waitin’ for de Glory!”

“And,” went on the preacher in a deeper voice, as soon as the testifying had died down, “And, bredren, where shall we find dat bressed Apostle dis day? He is on dis Earf yet, bredren, but where is he? I ain’t going ter say right straight where he is; I ain’t got no permission ter say it—yet. No, bredren, it ain’t in my power to tell you. But I can sholy tell you dis. Ain’t you never notice one thing? Sho’ you has. Ain’t it been discuss? Ain’t folks ask each other? Ain’t it one of de most oftenest things they ask? ‘Why don’t our Bishop preach ever from de Book of de Revelation? Ain’t he preach from every other book there is?’ Yes, bredren. He sholy preach from every other book, only from dat dere book he don’t never preach. An’ one day I says to him, I says, ‘Bishop, why isn’t you never preachin’ from de Book of de Revelation?’—Dat’s what I says—I says, ‘All de brudders and de sisters is askin’ just dat question.’ And you all know what he says to me? He says, ‘I know I never preach from dat book, but how can I preach from myself?’ Yes, ain’t dat what he say—‘How can I preach from myself?’ I ain’t goin’ to allaberate furder, bredren. I da’hn’t say right out what I knows. But I do say dis. If you set togedder dem two t’ings—dat Saint John he don’t never die, never will till de Glory come, no, till dat Glory show on Earf he never goin’ ter die; and dis other fac’: ‘I kain’t preach from myself,’—well, den I don’t need to say more on dat subjick. You put dem two t’ings togedder, put dem togedder I says, and you gets sholy one clear answer. He’ll tell us in his own good time. It ain’t for me to anticipate him. No, he knows best. But I do say now, you put dem two t’ings togedder, and you gits one plain answer, ef you has any brain at all—”

"Oh, yess, Glory— Oh, yess—Glory—" shouted the benchers, waving their arms and testifying wildly in tumult. The sermon was clearly no news to them. They were aware of the true nature of their head. It had been discussed and re-discussed. From the Bishop's hints and remarks the great truth must have dawned gradually and awfully upon them. The preacher had only to state it over and over



THE "SHOUT"

again with increasing conviction (and subscription,) till the time should come when he would reveal himself in all truth. Evidently the Day of Glory was close at hand, or the Saint would not have revealed himself at all.

So the preacher continued. He expounded the mire into which the other churches had fallen, with their professional priesthoods; he depicted Christ once more cleaning out the Temple. And at his continued and perspiring eloquence the

congregation worked up its enthusiasm to a higher and higher pitch, shouting "Oh, yess!" and various holy exclamations. The preacher's conclusion was, however, a little mercenary. From direct hints that their Bishop was actually St. John the Divine, to the Church's need of more money seemed too abrupt a fall from the sublime to the practical. However, the plate was passed round while a group in the distance, standing on chairs and led by a huge Negro with an immense bass voice, sang "spirituals":

Oh, I wuz goin' home.  
Along de way,  
I met ole Satan.  
Didn' I pray?  
"Oh Lord, I cry,  
"I love you so,  
"Make ole Satan  
"Let me go."  
Ole Satan give  
A grab at me;  
He catch my sin,  
But I go free.  
My sin go tumblin'  
Down to Hell,  
My soul went leapin'  
Up Zion's hill.  
I tell you sinners  
Here's a fac'  
If you wan' to fin' Heaven  
Don't never look back.  
I tells you once,  
I tells you twice,  
Ole Satan'll grab you  
Fur shootin' dice.  
If he runs you  
Like he run me,

Get down to Jesus  
On your knee.  
You got to throw  
Your sin away,  
Or Satan he'll  
Grab you some day.  
Satan he'll cheat you  
On de road,  
Tell you to throw  
Away your load.  
He'll say, "You throw it  
"On de groun';  
"No good carryin'  
"Dat aroun'."  
You throw it straight  
On Jesus' back  
Or Satan he'll  
Be on your track.

The song went on interminably, while the ushers sifted the huge congregation for its money. Such a song is almost a matter of inspiration. Or rather it is an assembly chosen from a collection of themes all lying ready in the memory to be rearranged by the humour and wit of the leader. The first half of a couplet gave the three other members of the quartet at once the clue to the second half, and as a consequence the spiritual was a string of statement and response, marked by a strong rhythm and an almost monotonous recitative.

"Now bredren," cried the preacher, as soon as the money had been gathered in and the long strange song had come to its end, "we're going to have a big Holy Shout, like dey used to have. We're going to Shout to de Glory of de Lord, to de Glory of de Lord."

He began to beat his hands and, to the rhythm, the har-

monium took up a simple tune and to the tune the congregation in turn began to beat its hands until the great hall was a throb of clapping palms. Throb—throb, throb—throb—Those reiterative palms beat the air into an elastic response; the rhythm became more insistent, more universal; the choir was crying out words but they were unimportant in the tremendous weight of that rhythm. It caught your heart and forced its action into unison, so that the blood pulsed as though under the strokes of a cosmic pump—it beat upon the brain like the sticks on a kettle-drum—

Up till now the girl on the floor had been as quiet as though dead, but at the growing of the rhythm her head began to swing from side to side, turning on her neck. As the throbbing grew in an intenser insistence, her head turned with greater violence until we thought she would do herself an injury. A woman cried, "Glory Hallelujah!" leapt to her feet and staggered out into the open space and began to dance. Another followed, and more and more, till the whole of the sawdusted floor was thick with dancing figures. Now the recumbent girl's arms were tossing to and fro in tune with her head.

If we looked at the long lines of the clapping black people before us we could begin to note the signs of growing religious ecstasy. First the eyes began to glaze; then the head was flung back on the spine; a trembling agitated the shoulders, and suddenly, with a cry, the newly inspired would be dancing for the glory of God. One thing we noted—men were not encouraged to dance. If a man shouted out, two ushers ran at his elbows and urged him out quickly into the steady night. The dancing was of a curious and savage nature. A spasmodic movement jerked up the bodies, as though they were jointed wooden figures, abruptly struck. Their heads were tossed to and fro; their elbows were drawn up and back so that they clapped their hands on a level with



the breast, the step was an alternate step and a forward stagger or trip; and the trip threw the spasmodic movement violently up the body till it seemed literally to hit the head, until we feared their necks would snap. Their eyes were glazed and their breath came pantingly, in time with the insistent pulsating of the beating palms. Cries of "Oh, Yess! Oh, Yess!" and Hallelujas were shouted across the rhythm. Some of the inspired uttered loud yells and spun round; others continued to dance with body breaking movements. One taboo dominated their actions, even under the most violent religious emotion; they must never cross their feet; such a movement belonged only to secular dance, and the "shouter" would have been at once ejected from the "House of God."

We watched the recumbent girl, whose spasms and movements had been growing in violence as the throbbing continued. At last, with the help of the people near, she was lifted to her feet; and, although we could not imagine her capable of standing up, she began to dance as violently as any; activity apparently poured itself into her from the inspiration of the hypnotic throbbing. For half an hour this mad dance continued; for three quarters the throbbing had eaten into our own brains. The dust had been stamped into the air, until, except for the dancers in the foreground and the bench of Ushers, some of whom were now themselves "shouting," the great hall was hidden in a haze. Now some of the dancers began to fail. A few staggered to benches, others continued to shout till neither Nature nor religious ecstasy would hold them up any longer and they fell amongst the dancers' feet. Some even had a kind of cataleptic fit and rolled stiffened to the floor. These, the male ushers picked up by head and heels and carried outside as though they were on stretchers. Such was the ultimate fate of the girl who had been on the floor; she was carried

away and we never saw her again; but some of the others recovered and came back to continue until a new exhaustion should overtake them.

How long this amazing spectacle continued is difficult to say. Our own sense of time was merged into that insensate rhythm. Old white ladies have admitted to "shouting," when they were children, with their female slaves, and we cannot blame them. We had definitely to resist that rhythm; it was almost a hypnosis. And when at last, under the authority of a commanding town-council, the shouting began to die as the clock neared midnight, we felt almost as exhausted as though we had ourselves been testifying in dance to the Glory to Come.

The journalist elbowed us out through the crowd of excited Negroes. He took us to his car and stepped on the self starter. Here was a different rhythm, the rhythm of the mechanical age. It could never make your heart throb as could that crazy tom-tom translated from the African jungle here into the service of the "Lawd." Our friend drove cautiously.

"Ever since this House of God has been going on," he said, "it is almost dangerous to drive in the streets on this side of the town after midnight. Those religiously intoxicated Negroes will stagger into the road without warning and fall under your wheels. One or two have been actually killed that way."



## CHAPTER XVIII

### WORSHIP, EDUCATION AND SONG

At the tourist camp where we had intended to put up for the night after leaving Charlotte, we were forbidden entrance. A fair was starting in the next field and some of the campers might sneak through the fence, free.

"Let's get permission to camp in the fair ground itself," said the ingenious Jo, "and then we can sketch all the show people and study them more easily."

We set out to hunt up the necessary leave, not doubting for a moment, from the kindness we had found everywhere else in America, that it would be granted. But we had never dealt with a Rotarian before.

The Secretary scowled over our evidence; we explained our object volubly.

"That's all very well," he interrupted at last, "but what do I get out of it?"

"The chance," I said gently, "of doing a favour which will cost you nothing. Service, in fact."

He looked at me suspiciously.

"No. I don't see anything in it for me," he said.

"Excepting maybe a little posterity," I suggested.

"Naw," he grunted, turning his back on us. "I don't see anything in it."

Darn it! I wish we could remember his name! We'd give him posterity!

So, rejected by the White People, we took refuge with the Coloured.

We had intended to call on Mr. J—— next day. He was the Coloured President of a Negro College. Deprived of any place where we might camp, and needing advice, we decided to call him up on the phone at once. He had been recommended to us by the Atlantan organist as a man who might be able to put us in touch with "Shape Note" singers.

We were at once cordially invited to come to the College. As he was off to Atlanta in a few hours, the only chance of meeting him was to go as soon as possible. Dusk had fallen, and in the darkness the College was not easy to find, as few persons in a Southern city would expect white people to search for a Negro college, and our pronunciation was not of the locality. But at last we reached it, hurriedly interviewed the packing President, and were escorted, to our astonishment, to a fine building with tall Corinthian pillars and a noble porch, where we were installed in a suite of rooms and made to understand that here were our quarters as long as we wished to stay.

Leaving the "Hearse" in the broad drive, where it looked most disreputable next morning, we were taken back to the President's house, where we were served a delightful and dainty supper while his pretty young wife and two of the college teachers discussed the best way of finding us a band

of shape note singers. Considering that we had introduced ourselves without a letter to back our bare word—for the organist had been absent when we left Atlanta—we could only say to ourselves: "This is true hospitality."

The coloured President's house was furnished with the simple good taste of a man of academic tastes. There were more books than there are in the average American house, and the meals showed that the coloured race does not lose its instinct for cooking by becoming learned. Even if the menus were especially selected on our account, we must surmise that the coloured professor dines with more understanding of the art of the table than does his white colleague—that is, unless the latter has a good Negro cook.

At breakfast Mrs. J—— said that in a neighbouring town, a coloured church was holding revivals, at which we might find not only shape note singers but also a peculiarly interesting spiritual quartet. She had telephoned to the minister to tell him that we were coming. Thirty miles separated the two towns. We were now in North Carolina, and indeed had been ever since Charlotte.

Speeding along on the smooth concrete highway we were suddenly brought to a halt by a small clearing in the woods. In this clearing stood a potter's shop. Work-sheds and a small baking kiln were at one side and on the roadside was a too rustic enclosure in which pots of many kinds were exhibited for sale. The place was very consciously "log-cabin," and called itself by that name. Indeed, had we not already heard of the North Carolina potters, we would hardly have stopped to look again; this had so much that repellent air of the faked past.

But the potter was genuine enough. He worked with Carolina clays and held his tradition from a line of local potters who could trace themselves back to a great-grandfather from the Staffordshire Five Towns. Even his potter's wheel was turned by hand, where we expected at least an



electric motor. We had already an introduction to a Carolina potter who lived at a place called Jugtown, but we had searched the map in vain for the name and on the road up could get no information, so little impression had Carolinian pottery made on the natives of the State.

"Oh, him," said the potter. "Jugtown? Yes. But that is way down in the Southeast. Oh, we know all about that feller. You see, the trouble is he's got notions about Art. I mean you see we've got our pots the way we've always made 'em, and a few new kinds of course. But, do you see, he talks about this here Simplified Form. Well, maybe there's something in what he says, but he can't come talking high up to us potters. Why, we was potting before he was born, pretty near; and we've learned our potting from our fathers and from our gran'fathers before them. He's got what I call a kinda fad, if you understand me. No, we don't agree with all his notions. He's got altogether too many ideas, that's what it is."

The old argument of a degenerating art against a man who would recall it to its primitive simplicity! The question is: Can one revive a dying art? How can the potter in his fake log cabin hope to crawl back to the days when his grandfather potted for the local needs? Now he must pot for the vulgarian who tours in his half-paid-for car; he must pot for the man whose father was a Czech and whose mother was a Swede and who made his money by being too pig-headed to sell his father's fruit shop before the site became worth a hundred thousand dollars. Would such a man appreciate "simplified form"?

When night fell we became aware of a distinctive feature of Southern life, the tobacco crop. Passing through the town where the revival was being held, we had noticed big "go-downs," like railway goods-sheds, at intervals along the main street. When we drove back after dark, these

were all lighted and we could see, spread out within, heaps of raw tobacco leaf in bundles. Now the old cars, which we had seen on the road piled high with something hidden under old carpets or bedcovers, explained themselves. Men stood under the deep eaves of the go-downs spying on the arriving cars—

“Hey, friend!” they called out. “Hey, friend, there! Ain’t you going to bring your tobacco to us? We gives the best prices for quality. We gives the best. Hey! Ain’t you going to bring it to us, farmer?”

But evidently each had a favourite dealer, for the old cars invariably passed on, the lean farmer, under his chip hat, crouching over the wheel with that characteristic country grip that makes the driver look like a devil of a speed fiend even when he is bustling his car along at a mere twenty-five.

And the medicine men had hired empty shops and were parading the street with derelict kilted Scotsmen and bagpipes to draw the farming folk who had sold their tobacco.

The church was in the dark unlighted street typical of the Negro quarter. However, there it was at last, its windows glowing gently in prismatic colours, a shadowy congregation climbing up its steps with the deliberation of habitual church goers and spilling voluble gossip before a churchly silence should seal their lips.

A lean and ascetic looking coloured minister met us at the church door and introduced us with ceremony to the fat preacher for the evening, and for the first time we learned the guise in which we were welcomed.

“I have to present to you the Reverend Jeremiah Sampson,” said the minister. “This is Professor Gordon of scholastic interests attached to the Educational Department—and his good lady.”

You have to hear the Negro minister’s intonation to get

the full value of my new dignity—"scho-lastic . . . Ed-dew-cayshe-o-nal . . . Dee-part-ment," but in the Reverend Saunders' mouth it had an even richer quality. He was a big man, and the great Negro voice boomed from him, inspiring in its very sonority.

The church was finer than we had expected. It was amphitheatral and the circular rows of ascending pews faced a raised dais on which was a carved lectern of the design popularly supposed to be pleasing to the Trinity. A curved balustrade protected the dais from the congregation, and between platform and rails stood a table with a dish. A raised stall for the choir stood to the left of the dais. The two



A SPIRITUAL QUINTETTE

clergymen sat in stately chairs on the dais, while five young men with coloured bands on their arms arranged themselves in the choir stalls. The congregation, few in number and mostly middle aged and rather hopeless women in clothes as black as their faces, spotted themselves in the ample pew space. The ascetic old minister surveyed their small numbers with a smile of gentle understanding.

"We had hoped tonight to have with us some of the choirs competing in song," he said, "but we had over-

looked that tonight is the last night of the coloured people's fair. As this is their one great celebration of the year

we behove us brethren not to stigmatize them for wishing to take advantage of the opportunity. Which also accounts for the comparative paucity of the congregation. But we must be very, very grateful that the Quartet has thoughtfully not deserted us and in consideration of the Quartet's kindness we have engaged not to prolong the service that they may get back to their very natural and innocent enjoyment before it closes. Let us now offer a prayer, brethren."

The service proceeded with simplicity until the sermon. Then the big preacher arose and flung open the Bible with a gesture.

"Brothers and sisters—" He gave a little extra bow in our direction as though conscious that though he must include us yet he understood that we might hold ourselves a shade higher in the sight of God—"I am going to prove to you tonight infallibly, against the arguments of the sceptics, the undoubted Divinity of Jesus Christ."

He began with restraint. We, thinking of the occupants of the pews behind, wondered what they were making of the sermon. We cannot suppose that one member of that flock had any suspicion that the Divinity of Christ had been impugned, or knew what sceptics were. Bringing faith to that congregation was indeed bringing coals to Newcastle. The Preacher's words flowed at first with unexpected precision, he had studied evidently both grammar and rhetoric. But, as he went deeper and deeper into his subject his voice increased in volume and every sentence leapt from his mouth in a veritable roar; his gestures increased in enthusiasm until he was stamping about the platform, shaking his great fists at the unbeliever, and the perspiration was pouring down his face. He hit the pulpit so that, had it not been made of solid ecclesiastical stuff, it would have split under his blows. He shouted, leapt, banged and gesticulated until disbelief was impossible. And then, having slain



every sceptical argument which he could invent—though none of the true ones—as if with the blows of a huge club, he gave one last exulting howl of triumph, a last bison's bellow of defiance at any unbeliever yet lurking in the darkness, and subsided onto his chair, where he pulled out a big handkerchief and mopped his face. The thin minister then rose and, in a voice very faint after that tornado of elocution, challenged any unbeliever to rise and refute the reverend's magnificent array of truths. It was as if the valiant little tailor had challenged the nine flies to rise up and sip his jam once more. They were swotted.

The collection came while we were all yet under the spell. The big preacher, eyeing the congregation, almost demanded their money *and* their faith. Now we understood the object of the smaller table between the balustrade and the dais. A little old well dressed Negro stepped forward to it and laid a fifty cent piece in the dish, and one or two others in turn contributed. I also walked out and added our offering. The preacher, who was keeping a sharp eye on the plate, made a trumpet of his hands and through them rasped in a hoarse aside to the people:

“Brethren, the professor's given a dollar.”

Under the power of the preacher's eye one by one the members laid down their mites. If anyone thought of avoiding his duty the Reverend fixed him or her with a glower until, creeping forward, that member paid up. When the last nickel had been deposited, the preacher picked up the plate and, stirring it with his fingers, counted the contents. He put it back on the table.

“There's four dollars and twenty cents,” he announced, “now I'm not saying that that isn't a fine collection for this meeting, thanks to the generosity of our white friend, Professor Gordon of scholastic interests attached to the Educational Department, who we have here with us tonight ac-



accompanied by his good lady; but, brethren, what I wants is to see that raised to five dollars. We wants eighty cents more, brethren. Eighty cents more to make a round sum for the glory of God. . . .”

He beat out the changes on eighty cents and five dollars until the little old man brought out another nickel.

“Thank you, brother. Seventy-five cents now . . . only seventy-five. . . . Thank you, sister. . . . Only seventy. . . . Thank you, lady . . . thank you (to Jo) another twenty-five, this is generosity . . . only forty-five . . . only forty-five. . . .”

We refrained from filling up the five dollars because we did not wish to bring this scene to an abrupt conclusion. Then the quartet, who as a matter of fact were five, after some whispering, came up one by one and each in turn shyly contributed. This was evidently an unusual proceeding; the preacher was profuse in his gratitude. Also, he announced that they had generously foregone the percentage of the collection which was their customary fee.

Nevertheless fifteen cents remained to be found, and for a time all the preacher’s eloquence was powerless to extract it from the members. After ten minutes we were still the fifteen cents short.

Suddenly the preacher, with a huge bellow, stabbed his long finger at the little old negro.

“Thar’s a brudder feelin’ in his pocket,” he shouted. “Brudder, a man what feels in his pocket is lost. Brudder, I calls on you to make up that fifteen cents. That fifteen cents is yours. . . .”

The poor old man, feeling very publicly exposed, continued to hunt through his pockets, but not one nickel of change could he find. At last a look of resolution dawned on his polished face. He stepped up to the table, pulled open his trousers pocket to its widest extent, poured the whole col-

lection into it, shook the weight comfortably down and, with a gesture of finality, slapped a five dollar note onto the table. The collection was closed.

Indeed a collection of one pound English from that congregation was a feat remarkable enough; at least three times as much as could be collected from a similar set of people in similar positions in England. Moreover Negroes are not paid the large wages of the white American working man.

In spite of the interest of the sermon and of the collection we had been feeling cheated by the absence of the "shape note" singers; but now the quartet (or more correctly, quintet) paid us for our journey, in full measure. The five men gathered in a close circle, their faces together as though about to whisper confidences. Then the leader threw back his head and announced the first line melodiously. Evidently the choice had been inspired by the sermon which had insisted strongly on the medical powers of Christ.

Oh, He a-raisin' up Lazarus  
Yes, raisin' him up,  
Raisin' him up from de dead,  
Yes, dat's what He done.  
And all de folks was watching roun',  
Jedus bring up Lazarus f'um under de groun'  
An' say him, "Go prophesy;"  
An' say him, "Go prophesy."

De sick He goan to heal,  
Yes, He heal 'em;  
De blin' He make to see,  
Yes, dat's a fac'.  
He done able de cripple to walk  
An' make de dumb man to talk,  
An' say to him, "Go prophesy;"  
An' say to him, "Go prophesy."

We had heard the Fisk singers in Paris, and other trained spiritual choirs on the gramophone records, but this choir had something which we had expected to find in Negro singing and had hitherto not found, something which should be the religious counterpart of that wild night at Small's Paradise. Well, here it was at last. Even "the shouters" of Charlotte had not this peculiar and essential Negro quality. The four members of the quartet sang in the "Spiritual" harmonies to which published versions have accustomed us, but the fifth, with a strong high tenor voice, threw across the harmonies of the four blended voices a wild counterpart, an improvisation which gave the singing a new quality, a dramatic intensity, sweeping it away from that humble little church in the slum of a Carolinian town and carrying it far into the African wilderness. The medicine man may have sung with that voice. What gave an additional peculiarity to the spiritual was that at times, now and again, the singers rose and fell, slurring in harmony, so that they seemed to be singing in quarter tone chords at times. Yes, this was a singing which was worth the trouble of coming a distance to hear.

They sang some four songs, all in the same inspiring and wild way. Then suddenly to my perturbation and amazement the preacher announced:

"Brethren, we have tonight with us, with great pleasure, our white friends, Professor Gordon of scholastic interests attached to the Educational Department and his good lady. Now, dear brethren, we hope that the Professor will be so kind and give the brethren a few comfortin' words."

This announcement took me fully aback. I had not come prepared to make a speech; promiscuous eloquence is far from my habit or practise. But I suddenly felt that I must not disappoint the church; for the honour, at least, of the

Educational Department I was bound to say something. But what to say? The singing still rang in my ears and I suddenly thought of the Fisk singers, how they had betrayed their racial talent by Westernising their songs. So ascending the dais I talked on that theme. I am convinced it was as far above my audience's head as the preacher's sermon; but of course the less they understood of it the more profound they would believe it to be. Negroes are no different from other people. Those scrub-women and wives tired with household duties could not understand what propaganda for the Negro race implied; nor what signified preserving the qualities of a racial talent. We had been reading an article which told how, under the lash of white man's humour, the Negro had become self-conscious; he avoided chickens, watermelons, spirituals, pigs' feet, coloured clothes, pork chops, razors and so on. He is afraid to be consciously a Negro; not seeing that his only chance of salvation socially is to insist that he is himself, to cling hard to himself, to build himself deliberately yet subtly into one of the racial elements of the new America. Yes, well above their heads, I preached my first sermon to myself and babbled into shape thoughts which had been hitherto only vague ideas in my mind.

The service was over. We had to give each member of the church the honour of a handshake. Then we had also a short talk with the choir leader. He seemed quite aware of the peculiar quality of his music, assured us that he intended to preserve it and had no wish to Westernise it. We let them go, knowing that every minute that we held them was a minute taken from the joys of the coloured fair. We said good night to the contrasted ministers, found the old "Hearse" and trundled back through the darkness to our suite in the coloured girls' college.

In North Carolina we became aware of a side of the colour question which is hardly ever presented, that of the blended Negro, the one who carries in his veins some—often a large proportion of—white blood. The view on the Mulatto is singularly characteristic of much argument about the Negro. For instance, the Charleston lady said, “I hate those half and halves, nothing good in them, bad qualities of both races,” but ten minutes later, as we had pointed out some talent other than the supposedly inherent Negro gifts of humour, fidelity and song, she cried, “Yes, but that’s his white blood. Most of these fellows have some of it somewhere.” So that the same mixture is responsible for all his vices and most of his virtues.

Mr. and Mrs. J—— were charming, companionable and cultured people. One may judge the conditions of their life by two little incidents. Mr. J—— had been to Atlanta on a conference. At the moment he returned we were sitting in his house. He walked into the hall, put down his bag, kissed his wife and said to her with a sigh of relief: “Well, I’m glad to be back. I never feel safe in Georgia.” Another: Mrs. J—— was explaining that they had come to the college from the North. “And can you guess the hardest thing I ever had to say?” she asked. “One day my little boy said, ‘Mama, why do we have to go in by a side door into the railway station, and not in the front like we used to in St. Louis?’ And I had to explain to my son—to my little child—I had to explain that he belonged to a cursed race—can you see what that meant to me? And after all it isn’t as if we had another country that we belong to. We are Americans whether we want to be or not. Our culture is American; our ideas are American; and yet America is the only country in the world where we suffer this treatment.”

The President of the boy’s college in Atlanta was so



white that when he took his place in a Jim Crow car the conductors would tell him that he had got into the wrong carriage by mistake. "I am with my own people," he would reply. So anxious was he lest we should get a distorted opinion that he would not even talk of the Negroes' disadvantages, only of the hope of the future and of the advances they had already made. And although Mr. J—— was readier to talk, he said this, which breathed an extraordinary spirit of magnanimity: "I hope you are gathering data from an equal number of white people on the question, or you will get a one sided viewpoint." And once more he said: "Although we are oppressed in the South I would rather deal with an average Southerner than with a Northerner, because once you have gauged the Southerner you know exactly and permanently where you will stand with him. A Northerner may begin in a broad spirit, but should the slightest thing annoy him he may become five times as brutal as the Southerner. With a Northerner you never can be quite sure of your ground."

The expressed belief amongst Negro circles in the South is that, in the course of time, the Negro race will be absorbed. At present the proportion of population is about a tenth, and some estimates consider that it will so remain. The Negro race is not dying out, as white optimists persuade themselves. The Negroes have a private catalogue of known cases of what is called "passing over," that is, of Negroes who are so white that they can hide amongst the white population. They say that almost a million cases have been counted, so that, although this figure is probably exaggerated, the number must be very large. We are surprised that it is not larger. Mr. J——, for instance, was not only capable of passing himself off as Spanish but did so when he needed a sleeping berth on a Southern train. He could enjoy

the ordinary necessities of a civilized man only by denying his birth. And this was a cultured, fair minded and thoroughly civilized person. His college was regulated entirely by the students themselves, who made rules for their own behaviour and saw them carried out. They took no advantage of this liberty, but on the contrary were rather more severe on their own actions than the college authorities would have been.

The position of the Negro was perhaps even more clearly emphasized in the next town where we halted, always looking for the shape note singing. Here we called on the head of a smaller school which stood under the shadow of a cotton mill. There had been trouble in the town because, after a Ku-Klux demonstration, the white children were amusing themselves by pushing the coloured ones off the pavements into the gutter. Some of the more spirited Negro boys were planning reprisals.

"We had to stop them at once," said the Principal. "You see, anything might start a riot. The workers in that cotton mill are poor whites, come down from the mountains, and we live in constant terror of them. For a trifle that whole factory might get excited and come pouring into here to destroy the whole place."

We could understand their terror. You must have been in the South to understand the pure, sinister quality of the word "lynch." In the streets those close eyed, thin lipped loafers stare with something inhuman in their gaze. They are like no people anywhere else; they have the faces of jaguars. Interbreeding, poverty, fever and laziness are obstacles enough for any race to contend against; add to this the competition of the Negro race, which is bound to undersell the white merely because no white man will pay it a white man's wages. There is the cause of the poverty and

idleness, and also the foundation of a great bitterness. The poor White Man can live in the same land with the Negro only by insisting on a superiority due solely to his white skin, so that the meanest white is the social superior to either Mr. J—— or the Principal at Atlanta. Take away that mean dignity from the Poor White and he will at once assert his arrogance by means of the pogrom. Educators may preach and hope as they will, but the dictator of events is the populace. Between the Negro and the Poor White, as things stand, we see no possibility of compromise. And the higher the Negro climbs in the social scale, the more he brings the Poor White into disgrace, and the nearer he brings onto his own head a seemingly inevitable tragedy. Even as we write we note that during four months no case of lynching has occurred. This is remarkable enough, but we have looked into the Poor White man's eye and do not feel optimistic. The future outbreak will be directed not against the Negro who has been tripped by his passions but against the one who would raise himself by his virtues.

Here in North Carolina conditions are better for the Negro than in Alabama, Georgia or Mississippi. The wife of the head master told us, as a pleasing fact, that in the shops the clerks even address her as Mrs. The same was told us by the secretary of the coloured fair which we visited in the afternoon. He was even more delighted. "Why," he said, "there are people so nice in this town that they receive me in their houses like a friend and even allow me to eat with them, but of course in secret. Only they say, 'You must not feel hurt if we do not greet you in the street, we cannot flout prejudice as far as that.'"

And this man was so white, with fair straight hair and blue eyes, that we were astonished to hear him talking of himself as coloured.

At this fair we met an old white man. He was a regular

David Harum, long and lank, with a slow humorous eye for humanity's weaknesses.

"I come here," he said, watching a colored trotting race on a dusty red track, "because I likes niggers. They're gay."

The shape note choir gathered for us in a little chapel that night. Here too we were competing with the delights of the coloured fair, but after supper they consented to exhibit their art for half an hour.

The hymn books were served round.

"Now, bro'rs and sisters, we'll jest sing No. 24," said the leader. "Brother Zekial, you give us de pitch."

Brother Zekial intoned a note. Each member of the choir tried the appropriate harmonic for his part.

"Dat's too high fur me," said a sister.

"Try different, Brother," said the conductor.

After a series of experiments the right pitch was found.

Then broke out the strangest series of vocalisations. The notes are printed in the music as shapes thus: For the scale of C major; C, an equilateral triangle; D, a semicircle; E, a diamond; F, a right-angled triangle; G, an oval; A, a square; B, an inverted segment of circle. The choir in reading over the hymn converted these signs into the tonic sol fa, but mispronouncing the words, thus:

Treble and					
Baritone	Deh-re	meh deh si meh	meh re re re-meh	fa.....	
Alto	Deh	deh deh meh deh	meh ti ti ti-deh	re.....	
Tenor	Meh-fa	si meh ti si	si si si si	si.....	
Bass	Deh	deh deh deh deh-meh	si si si si	si.....	

What with the softening of the symbols and the sudden chorus of Deh's and Meh's and Fa's, a crazy babel broke out as though a flock of musical sheep had suddenly appeared, a novel phenomenon. They tried over the hymn

three or four times till the tune was set in their memory and then they turned to the words and sang them with great vigor:

O'er Heab'nly plains de gol'n chimes  
 Of Zion ring dis day:  
 For passing souls dose chimes are rung  
 To guide dem on de way.  
     Sweet bells,  
     Sweet Zion bells.

They then sang another hymn in a different key. These two showed the simple nature of the contrivance and its extreme serviceability. (In another part of this country a different experiment, but on similar lines, was invented by an old Spanish priest to teach hymns to Indian converts. Having perceived the extreme sensitiveness of the Indian to colour he correlated the scale with a set of progressive tints, and his pupils learned to pitch the notes from the colours displayed. This was probably the first of the many attempts to find a relationship between colour and music.)

We thanked the obliging Negroes for their demonstration, and drove away to the camp ground, which we had taken the trouble to search out earlier in the day. But more than ever we regretted that we had not heard the system in full blast at a true "Shape Note Sing."





## CHAPTER XIX

### PHILADELPHIA

VIRGINIA—tobacco. Richmond—Richmond Gem. Yes, huge barns full of it! With America getting so pernicketty about the little domestic vices that a movie star finds it profitable to tell a woman's club, personally, that he has never smoked a cigarette in his life. We heard it; the Hero was Tom Mix, the two-gun Tom of the ranges. We'll never go to a Tom Mix film again. Another injury to the poor, defrauded South! Crabbing its tobacco trade now!

Scottsville, Virginia. Enjoyed the fine hospitality of a Virginia farmer; raspberries still thick on the canes in October. "That," said he, kicking a pile of worn motor tires in the yard, "is where the profits go."

"If the place takes fire," said the married daughter, looking at a fine old portrait, "George has to clutch that and I

must grab the old candlewick quilt; it has been valued at a thousand dollars."

But they weren't born to farming. The old man was a former business man from Chicago. Now he had risen to be the President of the local Farmers' Society. He had been farming there about fourteen years, and the average occupation of an American farm is something like seven years.

"The Endless Caverns," Virginia. Two miles of stalactites with a guide who has learned his wit from a book. Negroes have to pay double fees, and only one of the guides will condescend to take them round. The stalactites are almost as pretty as if they had been made by man, not quite so pretty as the pictures in the waiting room—but of course much more wonderful.

Washington earned its name. The rain fell for forty-eight hours. Even if we had been the kind of people who like looking at Government buildings, we could not have looked at them. We hurried on. A motor tour is not thrilling all the time.

We recognise some of our limitations, we will not waste words on town details. Here they are great abstract things, essences of hurried and unfinished growth, the Past falling before the Future, and the Future itself only designed to stand for a thirty years' term, to give way to the unseen Future beyond. Towns here are not such entities as are some European towns; they are but becomings, which hide here and there some dim flavour of the past, a flavour discreetly conserved by old fogey families which are rich enough by inheritance to delay the ultimate dive head first into the pell mell of affairs. Their plaint against modernism is like the protesting bleat of a sheep being hurried into the

place where it shall become canned Irish stew, unrecognisable from all other cans unless the label is on it. The *New York Times* published a series of articles called "Our Changing Cities." Its intent is to prove that cities under Modern stress can retain their individuality, but the author has hard weather of it and relies on history rather than on plain facts. The drawings and photographs, however, seem to prove that whatever remains of character is old fogeydom. Skyscrapers march across the land; business men breed to keep them filled; immigrants and first generation Americans swarm in the slums; clerks and mechanics fill the suburbs and are preyed upon by the realtors. Such is a modern city.

By fortune we fell into the charmed circle of Philadelphia; our hosts still had their house on the aristocratic Spruce Street, but from this barrier against the intrusive today we looked out and saw that Philadelphia was as St. Louis or Baltimore or Cleveland. Jammed up in a traffic block, for instance, there wasn't a thing which would say to you, "I am in Philadelphia, founded by William Penn." New York contrives to be somehow tremendously itself, and Los Angeles has a wide sky line monotony, because the realtors have forbidden skyscraper building. New Orleans has a corner now commandeered by restaurant keepers.

Nevertheless, despite protests, our hostess insisted that we should look at Philadelphia, and sent us for a town tour with her Negro chauffeur. But when we had returned we could tell her all about the chauffeur's last employer, about the difference he felt between his wife and his mother, about the conditions of Negro truck farming near Atlantic City, and about the dodges of gasoline salesmen; but about Philadelphia we had nothing new to say. She admitted that we were incorrigible.

In Philadelphia the Graphic Sketch Club, and its founder, Mr. Sam Fleisher, interested us. It is one of those social

experiments for which America is so interesting. Here is an attempt to bring to the slum child's circle an appreciation of . . . Yes, of what? Here is an art museum; here are art galleries; here are art classes; here is a disused church turned into an odd repository of religious mementoes from all cultures, a church with cosy nooks, ikons, talmuds, praying carpets and a pianola organ which breathes pipe music; art classes for any one who wishes to walk in, rich or poor, no questions are asked. Art, art, art. And yet this is not primarily intended to teach art. Art is only the medium employed. What is taught here is life. Here is taught something of the glamorous beyond, something which may become a background, no matter how drab the externals, something which will provide a means of escape through a sense, if only a rudimentarily developed sense, of the meaning of beauty. For this work, carried on single handed and at the expense of his own income, Mr. Fleisher received the Pulitzer prize for social work. He avoids other subscribers for fear of interference with his system. In social experiments of this nature America is becoming more and more interesting, experimental and generous. It is a fine way to leave a name for posterity.

The museum was deliberately planned, though at first we were puzzled; such a heterogeneous collection did it appear to be. Fine Greek vases and Chinese pottery were set side by side with finniking little modern Japanese ivories; the noble, the valuable, the rich and the unique hobnobbed with the dainty, the pretty, the sentimental and the odd. Hardly a single cabinet was either wholly fine or wholly sentimental.

"That is my point," said Mr. Fleisher, when we had told him our impression. "This is not a museum only of the great. It is planned so that any person, even the least educated, may find something there which will appeal to a sense of interest, beauty—what you will. But the interest, once

awakened, may be tempted to continue. From one form of art it progresses to another. Learning to like from having liked, and at last perhaps creating for itself some beauty in a tenement home from having appreciated a piece of filagree Japanese carving."

The house, set in a slum, is open to all; the museum is without guardians and yet no piece has ever been stolen. Once a lady challenged his ideas about the effect of art on the uneducated. He said:

"Bring here a group of the worst boys in your district and I will loose them in my museum unwatched."

"My poor friend! They will wreck the place," she answered.

At last under pressure, she brought them, pandemoniacal in a motor bus. They had fought their way all along the road, they fought their way up the stairs.

"Aren't you afraid now?" asked the lady. Mr. Fleisher would not draw back. He led the mob into the gallery. He explained that here were beautiful things from all over the world, made to be appreciated. Then he drew the lady outside with him and shut the door.

"They will ruin all your collection," cried the lady.

Silence only answered her. After five minutes they peered in to find the boys going round on tiptoe, enthralled, whispering and calling attention to one discovery after another. His case was proved.

On another occasion a group of girls visited the museum. He noticed their eagerness and suggestibility. As they were leaving he stopped one of the girls and asked her from whence she came; he had been so struck, he said, by their intelligence and by their quick response to these things of beauty. He congratulated them. But instead of answering the girl turned away and began to cry. Astonished by this unusual result, Mr. Fleisher quietly asked an older woman



with them what he could have said to wound her thus.

"These girls come from the reformatory," she said and added that this visit had been a revelation to her.

But although he has brought out much artistic talent dormant in these submerged classes, his chief object is not particularly to create artists. Appreciation, not execution, is his aim—to add a capacity for spiritual enjoyment from the external world, an enjoyment which costs no money and which gives an occupation for leisure moments and an impulse to beautify the home life of all around. He is offering glamour to those whom glamour shunned. He added that he likes the young to come and do their courting in his church rather than in the streets.

We went to the art classes. Here children from the slums drew side by side with students of richer origin; no fees, no limitations except the desire to work. In the younger class we found a very strange beginner. She was a young Negress; for here we had passed out of the South with its color restrictions. The model was an ordinary girl hired to sit, but in trying inexpertly to draw her the Negro girl had produced something extraordinary. She had drawn not the girl's face but one which might have been copied from a piece of Congo sculpture. The long cheek line, the curved eyebrows running into the long thin nose, the low placed small mouth, the straight neck—even the hair with its binding ribbon had been altered in proportion so that the work was a unity—all were as if copied from something which she could never have seen; copied not by vision but by an instinct of form inherent in her muscular system.

She indeed opens out a curious field of speculation. It is well known that an artist in his drawings is inclined to reproduce his own physical peculiarities; the man with short legs has always to watch the legs in his pictures; the man with a big chin has a tendency to draw prognathically. But

I have never heard suggested that a racial art culture could be considered nationally imperative and a particular sense of form an inherited instinct. Obviously the Holy Dancers in the House of God were using steps and movements allied to the jungle dancers of Africa, but those might well have been brought over and transmitted by example. Here was a form of art clearly not transmitted and clearly not a case of physical self-reproduction, because one of the peculiarities of Negro art is that it does not reproduce characteristically the most striking Negro characteristics.

"Do you notice that?" asked the clever instructor. "Isn't that a strange phenomenon?"

We agreed that it was; most interesting. Mysterious, in fact. Butler once suggested the theory of inherited memory. I do not know how much work has been done on his idea, if any. To his suggestion I myself once added that perhaps the timeless feeling in a work of art might be the result of art's possible power to put us in contact with this timeless memory. This young student of a despised race might be the means of testing the suggestion.

Mr. Fleisher's success at the Graphic Sketch Club induced him to undertake another, which unluckily we had no time to visit. This was a transference of his theories from the town to the country. A small and failing country town, called Woodbine, was offered to him. The place had a curious history. It had been founded at the time of the great Russian pogroms to receive the Russian Jewish refugees. Mostly merchants, they were planted out there in the country on poor land to do as best they could. Help is often more enthusiastic than discriminating. After many years of distress the discovery was made that the land was good for chicken farming, which saved the town from complete abandonment. The place remains more than half Jewish, but ever since its inception it has been slowly de-

generating. We were told that the introduction of a museum, an art centre, a community centre, dancing and art and theatrical classes, had made an almost miraculous change in the outlook of the younger generation. Formerly the only idea had been to escape, if possible. Now the youngsters are remaining. They have been taught that life can have value apart from that borrowed from the excitements of the cities. They have been made spiritually self-supporting.

The fierceness of the American cop is proverbial. Leaving Philadelphia, we had the ill luck to jam the fire engines in a narrow street. We were as a matter of fact waiting for them to pass in front of us, and found ourselves, instead, in front of them. If a policeman has any excuse to become blasphemous, we imagine it would be at such a moment. We got out of the way in a panic, stepped on the gas and drove off. But a mounted policeman galloped after us.

He signed that we should stop and while we were expecting that he would arrest us or tag us or do something equally unpleasant, he bent to the window and said with a grin:

"I see you are strangers here. Can I direct you by the nearest way through the town?"

We hustled along, planning to drive as far as we might that afternoon, because time was drawing in on us. A lecture at the Brooklyn Institute was due in a few days, and before that we had to visit a farmer in New Jersey, near the Delaware Water Gap. At dusk the rain began to fall again and we were forced to stop at a small wayside refreshment station to ask if any camping ground could be found near by. The owner was an ex-emigrant.

"Poot up a tent joost behind, ef you likes," he said.

We turned in and pitched there.

We were now getting well to the North; the time was the middle of October, the nights were beginning to be cold, so we took supper in the station rather than sit outside and listen to the drizzle on the tent. Luckily the couple were communicative.

They both came from Galicia in Eastern Europe but had met here and married here, only to find, after the marriage, that they were cousins. We asked them if they had any ambition to return to Galicia.

"Maybe," said the man. "Maybe we go back one time to visit. We don't go to stop. No, never. I will tell you dis. I know a feller, Galician man like me, see? Well, he got 'nough dollars he t'ink and he go back to Galicia. Buy de land dere, build him a big house. He say to me 'fore he go: 'Hey, Jank, I guess I goin' to be just about king o' dat place, see.' But in about one year or maybe two I see him back again. 'Hey, Mike,' I say to him, 'what you come back for? Ain't you got to be king dere like you say you was going to be?' An' he say, 'God fer darn, I tell you, Jank. I get dere and I begin to spend my money big, an' I buy me de lan' and I build me a big house and I t'ink dis are fine. But say, dose is mean peoples. I never t'ink dey so mean as dat. Dey say, 'Who's dat feller swelling round? Ain't dat on'y Mike what lef' hare widout a nickel?' An' dey gets as jealous as cats. Say, dey can't stand for t'ink dat a guy can go off an' work an' git himself some dollars. Dey git sore like Hell. Dey makes de life to us such a misery dat at last I has just got to pack up an' come back. Couldn't sell my house nor not'ing. Dey just so mean dey wouldn't buy. Say, Jank, I tell you dey so mean dey wouldn't even sell t'ing for us to eat. We pooty nigh get starve. Gosh, I pooty glad to be back home again.' Ya. Dat's what Mike tell me."

We could sympathize rather with the home staying Galicians. The American immigrant here learns a profound con-

tempt for the folks in the old country; he goes home in arrogant humour. He believes that the home people will estimate him as he estimates himself; the beggar returns prancing on horseback, and is astonished and mortified to find that this swank is not appreciated. But this was the first time we had heard of a community combining to freeze out the insufferable. In many parts he is tolerated as a necessary curse, and in some pandered to for his wealth. His vanity is encouraged until he has been fleeced. Mike was apparently both disdained and fleeced.

Naturally we pursued our enquiries about the Negro question.

"Say, dem black fellers," he cried. "Now I tell you one funny t'ing. Course over in Galicia I heard of dem Nigger fellers but I never come to believe in 'em. I mean, I t'ink maybe dey 'bout brown like Gypsies is. Fust time I sees one of dem Niggers I stare an' I stare. I t'ink he painted up. Yas, I did. Naw, I don't hol' with dem Niggers. What I say is, dey's low kinda folk an' dey's got ter be kep' down. Yer can't trust 'em."

"Dey scares me," said his wife. "My! dem guys looks at you wid deir white eyes in dat black face, an' I says, I do' knoe what dat guy means. If I met one of dem guys in de dark I'd go faint, yes, I would sure."

Here of course was a repetition of the Poor White sentiment. Still unassimilated in the social world of America, they were fortified by the thought that the scale contained beings of inherently lower rank than they. For although their son here was a typical little American schoolboy these two would never be thoroughly accepted, as they could not read English, probably had never learned to read at all. Indeed we ascribed some of their pleasant communicativeness and the sprightly quality of their minds to this illiteracy. It is a mistake to think that a lack of reading in-



dures the mentality of the ordinary man. If he can read he drugs his mind with the vulgarities of the Tabloid Press, if he cannot read he has to think or talk. Both are more stimulating than the common newspaper. The illiterate man keeps a mental activity which the newspaper reader loses.

That he had not lost by his illiteracy was proved by his position. He had a good job in a Philadelphia factory, and a car in which he drove to work. This big lot of his on the main road was increasing in value. He had built this gasoline station at a very strategic distance from the big city, and in the short time we were there we could perceive that he was doing good business. He had a good sized house adjoining, and behind it an orchard of fine apple trees. All this he had achieved, starting from nothing. And, a rare thing this, it was all paid for. He did not approve of the instalment system.

"When I buys a t'ing," he said, "I likes to have it behind me. Ye' see I don' like to see a t'ing get less vorth an' I paying for it all de time. I doan like dat."

Yes, it was mid-October. In the tent equipped with a summer outfit we froze in the chill damp. The tour was coming to an end.



## CHAPTER XX

### AUTUMN AND ADIEU

Nor till we had passed Philadelphia did we meet the glory of the American Autumn. Between Washington and Philadelphia were hints, but drowned in the persistent downpour; but from now onwards to New Jersey we rode through an increasing magnificence. No European country that we know can rival the depth and brilliance of colour contrast of the Autumn here; Sweden makes an effort, but the variety of Swedish trees is far below that of New England; where Sweden may rival in brilliance, she loses because of a certain monotony wholly absent in the States. The tremendous colour of it lifted our hearts to singing point. We were now sixty miles from the end of our journey, and every mile of that sixty was as if Nature had put out her best bunting to paint a visual climax. The flags were out, even if the crowds were lacking.

The little farm in New Jersey stood back a mile from the road. The prim white house was set on a green sward nestling under two high maples from which the leaves of pure gold were just beginning to filter down; a hundred yards away ran a trout stream which meandered down the valley in a series of loops and curves, making its progress across the fields as easily as the farmer who owned it sauntered through life. The farm lay on both sides of the dirt road. It seemed asleep, but it was contented sleep. The spring gurgled at once into the spring house where the milk cans stood in the water to cool. In the water were three trout, the farmer's chief interest in life, perhaps. He seemed fascinated to watch them as they lay there, their noses pointed upstream, waving their tails just enough to keep them in place against the running water. Farmer Jim and his mother were in a way like those trout. They too held their noses pointed upstream and made just enough effort to keep in place; they let life flow by them and stayed where they were. Perhaps the simile is truer still; perhaps that farm boxed them in as the spring house boxed the trout; for the fish it would have been useless to make great effort, they would only have bumped their noses against the netting at the intake. So, perhaps, Jim. But he accepted his boxing quietly. Only sixty miles away the towers of New York leapt into the air like flames of stone, but had New York never existed Jim would have been the same, a long aristocrat in overalls.

An aristocrat in overalls? Oh, Jim was an aristocrat all right. He could trace his ancestry back to one of Old Elizabeth's greatest adventuring families; and, what is more, put a pointed beard and ruffles on him, and he would have been the living image of his renowned ancestor, Sir Francis. There was a town in the neighbourhood too which bore the family name. Aristocrats? Well, one of the strangest things about

this strange America is that a large part of her aristocrats are amongst her poorer classes; not New York with her four hundred of course, nor Boston, where in the old rhyme:

The Lowells talk to the Cabots  
But the Cabots talk only to God,

nor Philadelphia, where, in the visitor's mind, the importance of the family Biddle may get confused with the importance of the edible Scrapple. We refer to the hereditary farmers of the Eastern States. We do not count the man of business as a true aristocrat, an aristocrat in the Meredithian meaning. Touching trade, he has stepped down from his elevation. He has compromised. The aristocrat was founded in feudalism and has always kept touch with country acres, not as a hobby, like the big business lord, but as the essential background of his existence. And driving through these villages you are forced to see aristocracy in the faces. You do not see this quality in towns. That sure serenity and that beauty of ripening age are missing from the hurried streets or the busy offices. The aristocrat preserved tradition; and nowhere is tradition preserved now except in the farms. The fate of the aristocrat is of course inevitable. He is washed under in the flush of commerce. It will happen in Europe also. A man who must be a little disdainful of monetary considerations cannot survive in a time when money is the measure of importance; inevitably he must sink to a place where he can preserve his self-respect and yet float, just keeping his nose upstream. Lineage and traditions are the first assets of aristocracy, and where will you find them but in the farmers here, and in the farmers of the right kind, for there are inevitably vulgarian farmers also.

Jim the aristocrat had come down to working his own acres alone, or that part of the expanse which he could work alone. He had not bought a tractor.

"You've got to work for yourself, and then work to pay for the tractor, and then work to pay the wages of a help, and it comes out about the same thing in the end," he said. "Only you've got more risk and more responsibilities."

Life in America has sailed up tremendously in expense and in necessities. The scale of living, as they say, has risen. Comparatively all this has fallen on the farmer. His taxes and a hired man cost him today just four and a half times the amount of produce that they did forty years ago. And the hired man works no harder. His Ford car, which in modern America is a farming necessity, costs him fifteen times what his horse and buggy cost him then; and his car cannot work on the farm. Today the farmer's automobile costs him one and a half times as much as the food and clothing of his whole family combined and it is almost a non-productive expense. Jim drove his car two miles in to town once a day with the milk. Small wonder that he keeps his life level by restricting his desires, doing only that amount of work which will keep him and his mother in comfort. Of all the luxuries, ease of mind and quiet are probably the most valuable, yet how few, out of all the other valueless luxuries, choose to buy these. We read *Walden* and go long distances to throw a stone on the site of Thoreau's house. We express admiration for the artist and philosopher; we say, "If I had time I'd like to do just that same thing," but when we see a mute unlettered Thoreau we say, "Hey, look at that Hick."

Staying there, on that quiet farm, eating in the big kitchen with its grandiloquent stove, we were tempted to reflect: Why did we make this tour, pushing on continuously, peeking everywhere, studying nothing? Would it not have been better had we stayed in some spot like this for the time, letting America soak into us? It might have been better,



but it would have been different. In the present case we have seen the pageant; in the other we might have discerned more of one man wearing the pageant costume. . . .

“The world is so full of a number of things  
I’m sure we should all be as happy as Kings.”

The world is too full. Like greedy monkeys grasping at more than we can hold we risk to lose all. . . .

However, even here a little corner of the pageant was waiting, for on the night of Hallowe’en all the village youth dressed up and paraded the main street in disguise; then moved into the community hall to refresh itself and to march round for a prize.

In the ill lit street the boys and girls went about giggling and jostling against one another trying to pierce through the various masks or disguises. The grotesque figures coming suddenly from the darkness into the dim light of the small shops had a mystery which was lacking when they gathered in the well lit hall. Some wore papier-maché masks of clever caricature, but many another stuck to the old fashioned habit of drawing a black stocking over the face, knotting it at the top of the head and cutting holes for the mouth and the eyes, thus making a very passable grotesque darkey. Out there in the gloom their jollity had been free and easy, but as they came into the light the village self-consciousness damped their spirits and struck them to awkwardness. A young minister, professional promoter of social amenity, tried to stir them into some kind of gaiety comparable with the intention of their masquerade, but he was both too young and too professional. The march round was formed, to which we played our music, and they did cast away some stiffness in competing for the prizes, but as soon as the music stopped the mass congealed again.

One afternoon Farmer Jim carried us all off to visit a relation of his who owned a chicken ranch. In a back room of the house stood a quilting frame with a half finished quilt stretched upon it, but that artistic sincerity of an older day has gone, the elusive trick of art has been already lost; there was nothing comparable to what we had seen down there in Georgia or Tennessee.

The chicken ranch itself gave us something of a shock and at the same time an image. Man had reduced the chickens to an image of what he is threatening to become himself. Penned into hygienically designed houses the white, perfectly clean fowls were mustered so densely that they moved about shoulder to shoulder, wholly hiding the floor space. We asked the farmer if they were not too densely packed, but he explained how much air each fowl needed, how each got its proper allowance of food, how the pens were scientifically sanitary, and so on. We had a sudden image of the hen of our old Europe, non-sanitary, squabbling for its food with a dozen others, scouring the fields for an extra worm or two. And we saw on the one hand modern Man of today and on the other Man of the past. The modern just like these hens, here, perfectly sanitary, shut into homes or factories of calculated air space, allowed out for exercise so many hours a day, plump, satisfied, content, turning out his meed of eggs per day. . . . And then we thought of those hoboes and gas tramps and wandering fiddlers and Show Boat actors and medicine men and carnival folk. And although they might not be entirely satisfactory as social characters, and although they might not be wholly sanitary, we felt that they had value; a self-reliance, a sense of liberty, an individualism which should make us encourage the breed rather than stamp them underfoot. But civilisation is for the caged hen, and it irks him sorely to see another outside of the chicken wire.

The tour was over but the "Hearse" remained. For her age and natural infirmities she had run nobly. We carried her back to Easyport and there consulted with the ubiquitous Alf about the disposal of her. Alf was frankly surprised to see her back. He pursed his lips over the "Hearse" but could recommend no better fate than the cemetery. Sterne asked, "Where do the dead donkeys go?" but in America there is no need to ask the fate of outworn cars. Beyond any big town you will see their graveyards; enclosures where the corpses of defunct autos show their rusting bones; massed cars, piled up cars, cars half torn to pieces, cars reduced to scrap ready for the old iron buyers, mounds of carburetors, heaps of gear boxes.

The Satan of this car Inferno made a face at our poor old "Hearse."

"I can't give you a dime more than fifteen dollars," he said. "If it had fenders now, I'd have given more, but those fenders is all ripped to pieces."

And we, who thought the fenders the least important parts of a car, now found that on them the car's value rested! Old fenders, if in good condition are readily resalable; for in a collision that is where blows from without usually fall.

However, the next cemetery offered us twenty dollars and, not caring to wander more for a possible dollar or two, we surrendered the poor "Hearse" into the hands of her destroying angel. She had served us well, if sometimes a little temperamentally. Melted down, we hoped that she would rise again into a new and finer guise pursuing that obvious course of improvement which man can impress on the material objects of his use to so much greater an extent than he can on the stuff of his own nature.

In this trip we had become so interested in the quality of this complex America that we had planned to make another

tour in the ensuing summer, this time from Los Angeles across the continent. We wanted to see the old French colonies of Louisiana, the plantations of Mississippi, the Hill Billies of the Ozarks, the new oil fields of Oklahoma, where conditions often almost equal those of the old Wild



THE LAST OF THE HEARSE

West, the newly rich Indians of the oil fields, tent shows in Texas, artists and Indians in New Mexico, the Grand Canyon, Death Valley, the hottest spot in the world . . . a whole grand gamut of new things awaited our wandering wheels. But the doctor stepped in. The strenuous days of our adventuring are over it seems, and what adventures we may contrive in the future must be of the more phlegmatic kind.

So that this book is in a way also a farewell to the vagrant life. Perhaps when we stepped into the "Hearse" we had already said good-bye to all that previous kind of foot-slog and the "Hearse," too happily named, was in reality carrying us on our last long wander.

Adieu to adventure!

But, as the fox said, who wants a tail anyway?

THE END



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